

HALF HOUR *with* GOD'S HEROES



THOMAS
DAVID
WILLIAMS



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THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

HALF HOUR WITH GOD'S HEROES

OR

STORIES FROM THE SACRED BOOKS

By REV. THOMAS DAVID WILLIAMS

Author of "A Textual Concordance of
The Holy Scriptures"



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A WORD TO THE CHILDREN.

DEAR CHILDREN :

These stories are written for you, because you like to read books of adventure, telling of strange and wonderful things; and I want to show you that the stories from the Holy Scripture are just as interesting as any tales you have ever read. Best of all, they are true, for these things all really happened in the days of long ago.

Beginning with the first days of Creation and the renewal of the world after the Flood, they tell us the history of the race whom God set apart to be His chosen people—the Jews.

Many things happened to them, as they became a strong and powerful nation; afterwards, growing weaker, they fell a prey to their enemies, were conquered, and were a nation no longer.

We shall see that as long as they were faithful to God and obeyed Him, all went well with them; they grew in power, in riches and in numbers. When they turned away from God, and would not serve Him, they fell under the power of their enemies, and suffered many and terrible things.

At last, some four thousand years or more from the days of Adam, Christ the Saviour came on earth, and the Old Law was at an end.

Every boy and girl should know something of the people and the history of the Old Testament. These stories have been written to give you that knowledge—to put before you in an interesting way the lives of those great men who lived from the time of Adam to the dawn of the Redemption.

TO THE OLDER READERS.

This little book enters a field that seems already well filled. But in every garden there is room for one more flower, if in that flower is found something new in shape or color or scent.

Perhaps the best claim to any merit this work may have lies in this, that it is somewhat different from most others of its kind. It enters more into detail than most of the Bible Stories hitherto written. And in that it gives, perhaps, a broader and more extended knowledge of the Bible characters and events, may be found its excuse for entering a crowded field.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Mrs. Katherine Seager Offutt, of Washington, D. C., to whom I am much indebted for kindly encouragement and assistance in revising the pages of this book.

THOMAS DAVID WILLIAMS.

Brookland, D. C., Dec., 1913.

THE ANGELS.

Many thousands of years ago, long before there was anyone living on earth, perhaps even before there was any world, God made a strange kind of being, neither man nor animal.

This being was a living person, yet it had no body. It could see, and had no eyes; it could hear, and had no ears, it could fly about and go whither it wished in an instant, and yet had neither wings nor feet; it could speak, and had no tongue.

This was a wonderful being, indeed, far more beautiful and more powerful than man. It could do many things we could never do, and knew more than the wisest man ever knew. It did not need to eat and drink to keep up strength and life; it never slept, and never grew old or feeble. This wonderful being was called an Angel.

None of you have ever seen an Angel, because he has no body, and you can see only what has a body. But God has told us many things about the Angels.

He made thousands upon thousands of these wonderful Spirits, so many that we could not count them.

They were not all equal in power and beauty; some were greater than others. In fact, there are in heaven nine different classes or choirs of Angels.

The first and highest, the Seraphim, stood before the throne of God, and were the nearest of all to Him. After them came the Cherubim, who also stood near the throne. It was the Cherubim that guarded the gates of Paradise after Adam and Eve

were forced to leave the garden on account of their sin. Then came the Thrones, the Dominations, the Principalities, the Virtues and the Powers.

When God had some great message of special importance, He sent the Archangels; whilst the Angels were His ordinary messengers to man, as we often read in the books of the Bible.

Of all the Spirits in heaven, there are only three whose names we know—Michael, Gabriel and Raphael.

I must not forget to tell you that when God created the Angels, He did not bring them at once into His presence. He wished to try them for a while, that they might prove worthy to live with Him forever; but what this trial was no one knows.

It seems that among the Angels there was one—some think his name was Lucifer—who became very proud.

Seeing himself so great and beautiful, for he was one of the very highest of the Spirits in Heaven, he made up his mind that he would no longer obey God or serve Him, but would put his own throne by the throne of the Almighty, as though he were equal to God.

This wicked Spirit went among the other Angels, and gathered together a great number of them. One-third of the hosts of heaven followed him and refused to obey God any more.

And now there was war in heaven. God sent Michael, with an army of the good Angels, to fight the evil Spirits.

The battle began and ended in an instant. Like a flash of lightning, Lucifer and his Angels were hurled out of heaven. Down they fell into a fear-

ful pit of fire, dark and dreadful, filled with all that was horrible and ugly—this was the pit of hell.

In one instant those beautiful spirits were changed into awful looking devils. No longer could they see God and love Him; no longer could they possess the happiness and joy of heaven; no longer could they hear the sweet music of the choirs of Angels. But instead, they were buried in a fearful prison, tormented day and night, seeing on all sides nothing but darkness and misery, hearing only the groans and curses of their companions; for they were buried in everlasting fire.

And Lucifer, no longer bright as the sun, became Satan, the wicked Devil, the worst in hell.

Terrible as was this punishment, they deserved it. In heaven, they had all that the heart could wish; they were beautiful and happy, living in peace and joy, loving God and knowing that soon they would be nearer still to Him, and would see Him in all His glory, as He sat upon the great white throne.

But they were not satisfied with this; and because they would not obey Him, they lost all, and lost it forever.

In their helpless anger against God, they like not to see men gain the place that they have lost; and so they tempt men to sin, and in every way they can, try to keep men from heaven, and to drag them down to hell with themselves. And worse than all is Satan himself, who, unseen, "goes about the world like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Often does the devil come to the door of our heart, and whisper to us not to obey God, telling us that sin is pleasant and will bring us no harm.

We must not believe anything he says, for he is a liar, and the father of lies; and all that he wishes is to make us as bad as himself, that we too might be cast into hell to suffer with him.

It was he who took the form of a serpent and tempted Eve in the garden of Paradise, telling her it was not true that she would die if she ate the forbidden fruit, but, rather, would become as wise as God himself. It is he who helps to make men wicked and revengeful and proud and envious; and those who listen to him will never be happy, but will be punished, just as he is punished.

After the fall of Satan and his army, God rewarded the good Angels who remained faithful to Him, bringing them closer to His throne. And there they are to this day, happy because they see Him in all His splendor and beauty, secure and safe, because sin cannot touch them there; and nothing now can take them away from Him or do them any harm.

Sometimes God sends the Angels on earth to punish evil men.

When He was angry with the people of Sodom and Gomorrha for their wickedness, He sent two Angels to destroy their cities with fire and brimstone.

Once the enemies of the Jews, with many soldiers, surrounded the city of Jerusalem to destroy it. In the middle of the night an Angel of the Lord came and killed all that army of one hundred and eighty-five thousand men.

When the end of the world is at hand, an Angel will sound the great trumpet, and call the living and the dead to the judgment seat of God.

Often has He sent His Angels to comfort and help His faithful servants on earth.

When the Jews were wandering in the desert, before they came to the promised Land, God sent an Angel to go before them, to guide them and protect them.

Raphael, one of the great spirits that stand before the throne of God, once came down on earth in the form of a young man. He guided the good Tobias on his journey; twice he saved his life; and on their return home, restored sight to the poor blind father.

When God was about to send His own Son into the world, the Angel Gabriel came to Mary, and told her she was chosen to be the mother of the Son of God. When Jesus was born, and the wicked king Herod sought to kill Him, an Angel came in the middle of the night and told Joseph to arise and take the Child and His mother and flee into Egypt. And some months after, the Angel appeared again, telling him to return now, for Herod was dead.

You have heard of the awful sufferings of Jesus in His passion. The night before He died, He was in the garden of Gethsemane praying, and He saw all that He was to suffer on the morrow. All the wickedness of the world was before him at that moment; and in His agony, He cried out to God, while blood, like sweat, came from His body, and fell, drop by drop, upon the ground. God heard His cry and sent an Angel to comfort Him.

Every day—and even now—God sends His Angels on earth to watch over and take care of each one of us.

From the day we come into the world until the day we die, there is an Angel always by our side.

It is he who keeps harm and evil from us, who watches over us and guides our steps; and when the devil tempts us, he it is who whispers in our hearts not to listen to him or believe our enemy. It is he who offers to God our prayers and the good deeds we do; and when we come to die, he stands by our side to keep the evil spirit away and to comfort us until the soul has left the body; then he goes back to heaven, for his work is done. This is our Guardian Angel.

We cannot see these beautiful Angels now, but some day we shall see them in heaven, if we love God and serve Him as they do; and not only shall we see them, but we shall live with them and be their companions forever.

CREATION OF THE WORLD.

A long, long time ago, there was no world. The beautiful earth, with its bright flowing rivers and streams, its mountains covered with trees and grass, its deep silent forests, the bright sun-light, and the pale, silvery moon, the thousands of stars set in the blue vault of heaven; all these were not. In their place was emptiness and darkness, and nothing everywhere. And this had been for many millions of years and more.

But God was living all this time, and after a while He said to Himself that He would create a world, the world we live in today. He could have made the world and everything in it in one single minute

had He so wished. He chose rather to make all things gradually, one after another.

The time had now come—this was many thousands of years ago, remember—and where there was nothing before, there appeared an enormous mass, without shape or form, dark and void. This was the beginning of the earth.

It is hard to think just what this looked like. Imagine, if you can, an immense cloud, dark as the darkest midnight, all in confusion, moving around and around, without shape or beauty, just as when a great storm comes up in the sky, and the clouds, growing blacker and blacker, pile one on top of another, moving in every direction, dark and shapeless.

After a while, out of this strange, huge mass, there arose a light, dim at first, then stronger and clearer.

As the light crept slowly over the earth, the darkness gave way step by step. God divided the light from the darkness; He called the light Day, and the darkness Night. And this was the beginning and end of what is called the first day in the creation of the world. How long that day was no one knows, perhaps many thousands of years.

All this time the earth was surrounded on all sides with thick, dark clouds or vapors. God now separated them; those above the earth became the clouds in the sky; those on the earth became the great ocean, or sea, that covered the whole world; and between these two was the air or atmosphere. This was the second day.

On the third day there rose up in the midst of this great ocean, islands, small at first, then growing larger; and so the dry land appeared.

The earth was yet warm and damp, when out of the ground there came forth strange plants, wonderful and large. One was the Tree Fern, not like the fern we have today, but with a thick straight trunk, fifteen to twenty feet high. Then there were the Tree Rushes, or Reeds, that grew in swamps and were as high as a house.

In the jungles and forests there grew tall, queer looking trees, without branches except at the very top; these trees were sometimes sixty feet high. Others, of which the bark looked like the scales of a fish, grew both in the marshes and on the dry land, and they too were over sixty feet high.

In those days all was quiet and silent as death, for there were no living animals or birds, only these strange looking ferns and reeds and flowerless plants and queer looking trees. The days were warm and damp, the light was pale and sickly, for yet the earth was young.

And now God said: "Let there be light made in the firmament of heaven, to divide the day and the night." Slowly there arose from the eastern bounds of the heavens, over the hills and plains of the earth, a great red ball of fire. Rising higher and higher in the sky, it grew brighter and brighter and stronger and clearer; and a new light spread over the earth, for this was the sun.

Across the sky it traveled, till it reached its highest point and sent down its rays, strong and clear upon the earth, scattering the mists and fogs from sea and swamp, and bathing all things in a golden light. Then it slowly sank to its bed in the west; and as it went below the horizon, the light grew dim and the



THE CREATION.

shadows of evening fell; and thus were the morning and evening made.

But see! When the sun had set, there arose in the eastern sky a pale silver ball, beautiful in its calm, quiet light; it was the full moon that now, for the first time, looked down upon the earth, the queen of the night.

And in the blue vault of heaven thousands of beautiful lights appeared; the stars, dotting the sky here and there.

All these God made when He said: "Let there be light made in the firmament of heaven."

As the sun shone brightly on the earth, the air grew purer and the trees and plants more beautiful and varied. And now there came out of the waters strange living creatures that crawled along the shores of the rivers and oceans, or lived in the great marshes and swamps.

There were huge lizards, some of them thirty feet long, with big head and eyes, and long, thin jaws.

Creatures of the strangest kind were seen flying in the air. One of them, the Dragon, or Flying Lizard, had a long beak, teeth like a crocodile, claws like a tiger, and wings like a bat.

These are some of the strange creatures that God created on the fifth day when He said: "Let the waters bring forth the creeping creatures having life, and the fowl that may fly over the earth under the firmament of heaven."

In the sixth day the world began to look more like our own. Trees like the palm, the oak, the maple and the beech, were seen in the forests, and the gigantic reptiles slowly disappeared.

Among the animals, there were the hyena and the panther, the deer and the camel, the rhinoceros, the horse and the dog. But with these were others that are now no longer seen on earth, and have been dead for thousands of years; animals strange and fearful, huge and strong.

There was one called the Terrible Animal, one of the largest of all the animals of the earth, a kind of elephant, eighteen feet in length. Another, called the Giant Sloth, was bigger than the largest rhinoceros.

There was the Mastodon, a huge elephant with four tusks instead of two, and the Mammoth, covered all over with long woolly fleece, its two great tusks curving backward.

As the world began to grow older and nearer to the time when man was to come, these monstrous reptiles and beasts disappeared and were gone. Those remaining were animals like the kinds we know of and meet today. The rivers were alive with fish, the air was filled with birds of all kinds, the hills and plains were covered with grass, and in the forests were seen the trees like those of our own day. But there was yet no man upon the earth, no one to enjoy the beautiful things God had made. So He said to Himself: "Let Us make man to Our image and likeness. And let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and the beasts, and the whole earth, and every creeping creature."

He took of the red clay of the earth, and out of it He formed the body of a man. But this body had no life; it was as dead as the clay from which it came. Then God breathed into its face His own

breath. At once it began to move, and it became a living body, the first man. And God called his name Adam.

Adam was different from all the other creatures on earth, not only in the shape of his body, but because he had a soul that could never die. He was made to the image and likeness of God. He could understand and know things in a way the animals could not. He had free will and could choose between good and evil; he could even choose to love and serve God, or not, just as he wished. And now the work of creation was finished.

On the seventh day God rested; and He blessed that day and made it holy, because in it He had rested from all His work which He had created and made.

This is the story of the wonderful work that God did when He made the world in six days. All these things He did just by His own word. He said: "Let these things be made;" and they were made.

Great and powerful is the good God who could do so much! No wonder, then, we have to fear Him and obey Him, and love Him as well.

All the world, the sun, the moon and the stars, are obedient to Him, and they do as He bids them.

And so must we; because God made us that we might love and serve Him now, and so live with Him afterwards forever in Heaven.

ADAM AND EVE.

In a certain part of the world there was once a beautiful garden. In this garden was everything that could delight the eye and charm the senses. There were the prettiest flowers of every color and shape, and fruit trees of all kinds. Birds of bright plumage were flying about and filling the garden with the music of their songs; the air was perfumed with the odor of flowers and shrubs. It was never winter in this beautiful place; the cold and the frost never rested here, for it was one continual spring.

There was in this garden a river, divided into four streams, that watered all the land and kept it green and fertile.

It was God who made this place. He made it to be a home for Adam, and He called it the Paradise of pleasure, for Paradise means a garden.

This garden of Paradise was placed in a country called Eden. Where this country was, no one knows. Some believe it was in the land we now call Armenia, in Asia; others think it was near the Persian Gulf, below where the two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, meet.

I must tell you of two very strange trees that grew in this garden. One was called the Tree of Life; the other, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

If any one were to eat the fruit of the Tree of Life, he would never die; and if he ate of the Tree of

the Knowledge of Good and Evil, he would know what sin was, and the great difference between good and evil.

When God placed Adam in Paradise, He told him he could have everything in the garden he wished, except one thing. He must not eat the fruit that grew on the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and He added: "In what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die." God brought before Adam all the animals and birds, and told him to give them a name. Adam gave to each of them a name to be called by, and that name they kept for a long time after.

But all this while, Adam was alone, his only companions were the beasts and birds, and so God said: "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself."

One day, therefore, He cast Adam into a deep sleep; and took from him one of the ribs of his body; and from this rib He built up and made a woman. When Adam woke up, he saw by his side a most beautiful creature like himself. He held out his hands to her and she came to him; he spoke to her and she answered. He called her name Eve, for this was the first woman and the mother of all the living.

For many days they lived a happy, peaceful life. Hand in hand they wandered by the paths and woods of Paradise, or walked along the banks of the streams, listening to the music of the waters and the songs of the birds; they knew no sickness or sadness, and they had no fear of death.

It was a bright and happy life they led in the garden; they were innocent and good, and knew no sin.

They walked by the side of the lion and the tiger, and played with the panther and the leopard. The birds would come and light upon their shoulders and be fed from their hands, for all was peace and happiness in Paradise.

When evening was come, they would look up to the bright stars of heaven and give thanks to God, whom they loved, and then sleep the sleep of the innocent, to awake, bright and joyful, with the morrow's sun. But dark days were drawing near.

One day, as Eve was walking in Paradise, she came to the middle of the garden, near the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. She saw a serpent by the side of the tree; and the serpent began to speak to her: "Why has God commanded you not to eat of every tree of Paradise?"

Now this serpent was no other than the devil himself, who had come to tempt Adam and Eve. But Eve did not know this, so she answered, "We do eat of all the trees of Paradise, except this one. God has forbidden us even to touch the fruit of this tree, lest we die." "It is not true," said the serpent, "that you will die if you eat the fruit of this tree. God has forbidden it because He knows that, if you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be as Gods, knowing good and evil."

Eve began to look more closely at the tree. The fruit seemed so tempting and pleasant that she began to long for it, and her longing grew stronger and stronger. In a moment of weakness, she stretched out her hand, took some of the fruit and ate it. She called her husband, told him what she had done, and he, too, ate of the fruit.

Hardly had they done this when they knew what a

terrible sin they had committed; they were afraid and hid themselves in the woods. From their hiding place they heard the voice of God calling out; "Adam, where are you?"

Trembling with fear, Adam answered: "I heard your voice in Paradise, and I was afraid and hid myself."

"And why were you afraid?" "O Master, I have sinned against you and disobeyed your command. The woman whom you gave me to be my companion, offered me some of the fruit of the forbidden tree, and I ate it."

God said to Eve: "Why did you do this?" "The serpent deceived me," she answered. Then God spoke to the serpent: "Because you have done this and have deceived the woman, all the rest of your life shall you crawl on the earth and eat the dirt, and you shall be cursed amongst all the animals." And to Eve: "Because you have sinned and have made Adam sin, you shall have sorrow and suffering, and your husband shall be your master."

Turning then to Adam: "Because you have listened to your wife, and not to me, and have disobeyed my command, you and she shall die. Whilst you live, in hard labor and toil shall you spend your days, and in the sweat of your face shall you eat your bread, till you return to the earth out of which you were taken."

That same day, God told them that they must leave the beautiful garden, never to enter it again.

Slowly and sadly, hand in hand, the sinful couple went; and as they reached the portals of the garden, they wept and kissed the ground they were never to see again.

Passing out into the world beyond, they looked back; and behold! they saw before the gates of Paradise, Angels, having in their hands swords of fire, turning every way, guarding the entrance to that happy land, which was never again to be the home of human beings. And so Adam and Eve went forth, driven by the hand of God; they lost sight of the garden and the Angels watching it; and from that day to this the eye of mortal has never seen it, for soon it disappeared from the earth forever.

They journeyed on till evening; then, sad and weary, lay down upon the ground, and looking up to the dark and cloudy sky above, they prayed in tears, and so slept.

Many years passed by. After a while a son was born to them, and they called his name Cain; then another was born, and him they called Abel.

Cain became a farmer and tilled the soil; and Abel a shepherd who tended his flocks.

Once, on a certain day, both offered gifts to God. Cain offered the fruits of the earth; and Abel, the best among his flocks. Cain was sullen and proud, and God was not pleased with his gifts, neither would He receive them. Abel was kind and gentle, and God accepted his offering. This made Cain very angry. He began to hate his brother, and soon made up his mind to kill him. He invited him, one day, to take a walk with him in the fields. They went out together. When they had gone some distance, suddenly Cain raised his club and with all his strength brought it down on the defenceless head of his brother, felling him to the ground. For one moment he stood looking at the dead body all covered with blood; then, dropping his club, fled away in



THE FIRST MURDER.



terror. At last he could go no farther. Then he heard a voice, as though from heaven; "Where is your brother Abel?" "I do not know," was his sullen answer; "Am I my brother's keeper?" It was the voice of God that Cain heard, and God continued: "What have you done? Your brother's blood is crying out to Me now from the earth. Because you have done this wicked murder, you shall be cursed, and shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth." Then God put a mark upon Cain that he bore all the rest of his life.

Thus was the first murder committed on earth, and the punishment of it was terrible. From that day Cain knew no rest or peace. Tormented with remorse for his sin, he could always see his brother as he struck him. Go where he would, he could not hide from his eyes the awful sight of that bleeding body. And so, for many years, he wandered from place to place in all that country to the east of Eden. After a while he married, and many children were born to him. He built a city, or village, and called it Henoah, after the name of his first born son.

The Hebrews tell a tale that years after, Cain was wandering in the woods one day, when he was struck by an arrow, shot by a huntsman who mistook him for a wild beast; and so he died.

But now we must return to Adam and Eve. You can imagine their anguish when they found the body of their murdered son. In their bitter sorrow, they prayed for comfort and strength. God heard their prayer and sent them another son, Seth, who grew up a good young man, a comfort and a joy to his parents. After him, many more children, both sons and daughters, were born to Adam and Eve;

and so for many years they lived, surrounded by their children, to a ripe old age.

Which of the two was the first to die, no one knows. But when Adam's life was come to a close, he had reached the age of 930 years; then his soul returned to God, and his body went back to the earth from which it had been taken.

THE FLOOD.

Not long after the death of Adam, the people became wicked; they forgot God who made them, and would not love Him or serve Him.

In those days there were giants living on the earth, enormous men, very powerful and strong. They fought one against another, and there was bloodshed and murder in the land.

God saw how wicked the world had become, and was sorry He had made man.

Now there was living at this time a man whose name was Noe. He was not wicked like the rest of the people, for he feared God and served Him. He had three sons, Sem, Cham and Japhet, who were good like their father, and did not live as those around them.

Often the people would laugh at Noe and say to him, "Why do you serve God and live as you do? Why not come with us, and eat and drink and be merry and enjoy life, and care not for God or any one else?" His only answer was: "I love God, and I wish to serve Him and please Him, I am happier

in doing this, than you are in all your pleasures and your sins."

Sometimes they threatened him, and even tried to kill him, because they did not like to have among them one who was better than themselves. But God protected Noe, so that he came to no harm.

And so they went on, day after day, thinking not of God, nor caring for Him, and becoming more and more wicked, little knowing that a terrible punishment was soon to come upon them.

One day God spoke to Noe: "I am tired of the wickedness of men, and I am about to destroy them. I shall bring a great flood on the earth, to put an end to all living creatures. Because you have not been wicked as the rest of men, you and your wife and your sons and their wives shall be spared, but every other living person on the earth shall die."

Then He commanded Noe to build an ark, or boat, according to certain directions.

Noe set to work at once, having hired a number of men, and with them and his sons, began to build the ark. It was a large boat of three stories or decks, covered on all sides, having but one door and one window, and divided on the inside into a number of small rooms.

Many people came to see the ark; and they asked Noe what he was doing, and what it was for. He told them what God was about to do. They laughed at him and called him a fool, for they did not believe him. Noe kept on with his work, and after many days, the ark was finished. Then, as God had directed, he gathered together many animals and birds, and brought them into the ark. He stored

the boat with food for himself and his family, and for all the beasts and birds.

And now God said, "Only seven days remain, and then the flood."

The people went on living as before, and would not repent of their wickedness.

The seventh day came. The people of the city had prepared a great feast. As they were eating and drinking far into the night, Noe entered the banquet hall, and stretching forth his hands, cried out: "O foolish people, why will you not believe? The hour is at hand, when you must die. The night is now far spent, and the morrow is near. When morning breaks you shall not see the sun, for the flood gates of heaven will be opened and will pour down its waters on the earth for forty days and forty nights. If there be any among you who will save his life, let him come with me into the ark."

But not a man of them moved; instead, they laughed at him, saying he was a fool, and some would have killed him.

Noe left the hall, and with his wife and sons and their wives, entered the ark, and the door was closed.

The morning came, indeed, dark and gloomy; heavy, black clouds covered the sky; then there broke forth such a storm as men had never seen before, nor has there been such a one since. The rain fell, not in drops, but in sheets. Faster and faster it came; the ground was covered; soon the water rose to the doors and windows of the houses, and higher and higher yet.

Now men began to be frightened. Some fled to the tops of the houses, and some to the higher ground, but the water found them there and washed



BUILDING THE ARK.

them away. Those who could, fled to the hills, thinking there to be safe; but slowly the water overtook them. The highest hills were covered, and all men and beasts were drowned; the very birds of the air, finding no place to rest, sank into the water and died.

For forty days and forty nights it rained upon the earth. The flood covered all things, even the highest mountains; and all living beings outside the ark were destroyed.

Only Noe and his family were saved, with the animals they had taken with them, for as the water rose higher and higher, the ark rose with it, floating on the waves.

At last the forty days were over, the clouds parted in the sky, the sun came out and looked down upon a strange and terrible scene. The earth was changed. Nowhere could any land be seen; nothing but water everywhere, far as the eye could reach; for the earth was one great ocean. Everything was still as death; all things that had sound or life were gone, sunk beneath the waves. And as the evening sun set in the western sky, its last rays shone on that strange looking ark, as it floated on the waters, bearing within it the only living beings on earth.

Day after day, it was the same, morning and evening, till five months had passed.

When these days were over, God sent upon the earth a wind that began to dry up the waters. Slowly, day by day, they grew less and less; and towards the end of the seventh month, the ark rested on the top of a great mountain, called Ararat, in the country of Armenia; and in the beginning of

the tenth month the mountains showed their summits.

Noe waited forty days; then, opening the window of the ark, sent out a raven. The raven flew away and never returned. Then he sent out a dove; but the dove, not finding a place to rest, came back to the ark. After seven days, again he sent out a dove. This time it returned, bringing in its mouth a little twig of an olive tree, green with leaves. So Noe knew that the waters had left the earth, and the dry land had appeared. Yet he waited another week, and sent out the dove again. This time it flew away and never returned. Noe opened the door and looking out, saw that the face of the earth was dry. Then God told him: "The flood is over and the waters are gone. Go out of the ark, you and your family, and take with you all the animals and birds and living things that were with you in the boat."

Noe went to the rooms where all the beasts and birds were kept, opened the doors, and let them out of the ark. Then, last of all, he and his family left the boat.

As soon as he touched the dry land, he fell down on his knees and prayed: "O God, I thank Thee, that Thou hast saved us from the flood; and now I and my family will always love Thee and serve Thee faithfully, for Thou hast been good to us and hast preserved our lives."

And he built an altar there and placed upon it the bodies of cattle and of fowl, offering them as a gift to God.

The Lord was pleased with Noe, and made him a promise that He would never destroy the world again by a flood; and He added: "Look up into the

heavens, and I will show you a sign; whenever you see it, you will remember my promise."

Looking up, Noe saw a beautiful rainbow, bright with its seven colors, shining in the sky; and this was the sign.

Noe lived 350 years after the flood; and his sons had many children who grew up and married and had children themselves; and so the world was peopled again. Noe lived to the good old age of 950 years in all, and died honored and loved by every one.

In those days all the people spoke but one language. What that language was, no one knows; but it was different from any spoken on earth today.

After some years had passed, the people began to grow more numerous, and they found the country too small for them. So they said: "Come let us make a city and a tower, the top of which will reach to heaven; let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad throughout the earth." They set to work, therefore, and began to build an enormous tower, big and strong enough to last forever. But God was displeased at this, so He said to Himself that He would put a stop to their work. And He did it in a very strange way.

Whilst they were working and the tower was growing larger and larger, and higher and higher, a queer thing happened. One morning, as they were about to begin the work of the day, they found they could no longer understand one another. Everything was in confusion and disorder, and they knew not what to do. For God, in one hour, had changed their speech, so that now, instead of one language, there were many, each different from the

other. So the work came to an end and the tower was never finished, and they called it the tower of Babel, for babel means confusion. For many hundreds of years afterwards the ruins of this tower stood to tell the tale of what had happened to those who tried, in their pride, to do what God did not wish them to do.

When the people were forced to stop the work because their speech was changed, they separated. Many went to far off countries, and in this way the different nations and tribes and races began on earth, and spread and increased until this present day. They became in time the black race of Africa, the yellow race of China and Japan, the brown race of the Malays, the red men or Indians, and the white men of Europe and America.

The descendants of Sem remained in Asia, and from them came the Hebrews; the children of Cham went to Africa, and from them the black race came; the children of Japhet settled in the different countries of Europe, and, a long while after, became the greatest of all the people on earth.

ABRAHAM.

Once upon a time there lived in a certain country known as Chaldea, in distant Asia, a man whose name was Thare. Among his many children there was one called Abraham, of whom I have many things to tell you in this story.

Thare was a descendant of Sem, one of the sons of Noe; he was about 70 years of age when Abra-

ham was born, and this was about 300 years after the Flood.

The people of the country where Thare lived were ignorant and wicked; they did not love and serve the true God, and many amongst them adored idols or statues of wood and stone.

One day Thare determined to leave this place and find a home elsewhere. So he took his family and all his goods and traveled many days, till he came to a beautiful country called Haran; there he remained for the rest of his life, and died at the ripe old age of 205 years.

Not long after this God appeared to Abraham and told him to leave this country and people and go into a land which He would show him. "If you do this," God promised, "I will bless you and make of you a great nation and people."

Abraham was a good man; he loved God, and served him faithfully. No sooner, then, did he hear this than, at once, he began to get ready. Taking with him Sara, his wife, his nephew Lot, and all his servants and his goods, he left his home and his country to go into a land that he had never seen before. He was not afraid, for he knew that God would show him where to go, and would take care of him on the way.

He journeyed on and on for many days, till at last he came to a country that, in those days, was called Chanaan, but is now known as Palestine, or the Holy Land, and there he dwelt for a while, near the town of Bethel. He built an altar to God and offered upon it gifts of birds and of cattle.

After some time, there came into all that land a great famine; the corn and the grass failed to grow,

and the people began to be hungry, for there was not enough to eat. Abraham left Chanaan and came to the country of Egypt. Now, there was in this country a great king who was known as Pharaoh. This king was powerful and ruled over all the land, and every one obeyed and feared him. Abraham knew this and was afraid. So when he came into Egypt, he said to Sara, his wife: "My life is in danger; for when the king hears about you, he will take you away from me because you are so beautiful; and if he knows that you are my wife, he will kill me to get me out of the way. When he sends for you, therefore, tell him you are my sister; then he will be kind to me for your sake, and I will come to no harm."

And so it happened. Hardly had a week passed before the king heard that a stranger had come with his family and servants into his kingdom, and that he had with him a most beautiful woman. He sent for them and was kind to Abraham, giving him many presents of gold and of sheep and oxen. And he said to him: "Let me have your sister, for she is a beautiful woman; I wish to have her for my wife."

But God was not pleased with this, and sent a grievous sickness upon the king and all his household; and that night God told Pharaoh to send the woman back, for she was Abraham's wife. The next morning Pharaoh called Abraham and said, "What have you done? Why did you not tell me she was your wife? "I was afraid, O king, that you might put me to death," was the answer; "and, therefore, I said she was my sister." Then the king restored Sara to him, and sent them away in peace.

Abraham left Egypt, and learning that the famine was now over, went back to the country of Chanaan, to the place where he had been before, near the town of Bethel.

In the course of time, he and his nephew Lot became so rich and had so many herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, that there was no longer room for them both in the same country, and the servants and herdsmen of the two began to quarrel among themselves.

Lot told his uncle that they would have to part, as they could no longer live together in peace.

Abraham was kind and gentle, and no lover of strife, and so he said to his nephew: "Do not let us quarrel. The whole land is before you; choose whatever place you wish. If you go to the right, then I will take the left; and if you choose the left, then I will go to the right."

Lot saw that the country near the river Jordan was rich and fine, so he chose that place and went to live in a town near by called Sodom. Abraham moved to the southern part of the country of Chanaan, to a place called Hebron, and there he made his home.

Some time after, a war broke out in the land; several of the kings of the country banded together and fought against the city of Sodom, where Lot was living. The battle was fierce and long; and when it was over, Lot and all his family were taken prisoners. One of Lot's soldiers escaped and came running to Hebron to tell Abraham that his nephew had been captured. Gathering together an army of his friends and servants, Abraham followed the kings and soon caught up to them. In the middle

of the night, whilst the enemy were asleep and not thinking of danger, Abraham attacked them and, after a sharp fight, defeated them, killing many. Lot and his family were rescued and brought back in safety to the city of Sodom.

After the battle, as Abraham was returning home, there came to meet him a great man, whose name was Melchisedech. He was the king of Salem and, at the same time, a priest of the true God. He brought with him bread and wine, which he offered as a gift to God; and he blessed Abraham in the name of the Most High. This is the first time in the history of the world that we are told of a priest of the true God.

It was about this time that the Lord came one night to Abraham, and showed him in a vision some wonderful things that were to take place. He told him that soon he would have a son, and from that son a great nation would begin, small at first, then growing larger and larger. This nation would be the slaves of another for four hundred years; after that they would be set free, would return to the land of Palestine, and would possess it and grow powerful and strong.

All this God told Abraham long before it took place; for he was speaking of the Hebrews, or Israelites, who, many years after the death of Abraham, were slaves in Egypt for four hundred years, then were set free by God, and conquered the whole land of Palestine, where they lived for nearly 1500 years—and were living there still when the Saviour came on earth.

One day Abraham was sitting at the door of his tent when he saw three men coming towards him.

As they drew nearer, he arose to meet them and invited them to come in: "I pray you to stay a while with me, and I will prepare a dinner, that you may rest and be refreshed before you go on your journey." These three men were Angels, but Abraham did not know this.

After they had eaten and had rested for a while, they arose as though about to continue on their way. One of them said to Abraham: "Where is your wife, Sara?" "She is inside the tent." "Your wife has had no children," the Angel said, "and this has grieved you, but now I tell you that soon a son shall be born to her."

Sara was hiding behind the door of the tent; she heard this and began to laugh, for she did not believe it, she being now an old woman. "Why did Sara laugh?" asked the Angel. "Remember that nothing is hard for God to do; it shall be as I have told you."

The Angels went on their way towards the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, and Abraham accompanied them a short distance. As they were journeying on, one of them spoke: "How can I hide anything from Abraham? Shall I not tell him what I am about to do, since he is a just man and serves God well? We are going to Sodom and Gomorrha, to destroy those wicked cities, for the cry of their sins has gone up to heaven. The Lord has heard it, and has sent us to see if it be true; and if so, to burn those cities and all that live in them."

As soon as he had said this, two of the Angels went away towards Sodom; but the one that had spoken remained.

Abraham was struck with fear, hearing these terrible words; and he began to pray for the people of

these cities, that God would spare them, for he knew that his nephew, Lot, was among them. He besought the Angel: "Surely you will not destroy the just with the wicked. Suppose there be found in the city of Sodom fifty just men; will you spare the city for their sake?" The angel answered, "If I can find fifty just men in that city, I will not destroy it." "But, Lord, suppose there are only forty-five?" "I will spare the city for the sake of forty-five." "And if there are only forty just men in Sodom?" "I will not destroy the city, if I can find forty just men there." "But if there are only thirty?" "I will save the city for the sake of thirty." "Lord, be not angry with me. What will you do if there are twenty good men there." "For the sake of twenty, I will spare the city." "I beseech you, O Lord, be patient with me. Suppose there are in Sodom only ten just men; will you not spare them all for the sake of these ten?" "Yes," answered the Angel, "I will." As soon as he had said this he disappeared, and Abraham returned to his tent. In the meantime, the other two Angels had come to the city of Sodom towards evening, where they met Lot, the nephew of Abraham. He invited them to come to his house to rest for the night.

"No," they said, "we will remain in the street." But he urged them to come and stay with him; at last they consented. So he prepared a supper, and they ate and rested.

Now some of the people of the city had seen the two strangers enter his house. Soon a crowd gathered about the door, and some one called to Lot: "Bring out the two men you have with you, that we may see who they are."

Lot went out to speak to the crowd: "What do you want with them? They are my guests; I cannot give them up to you. Leave them alone." At this they cried the more: "If you do not bring them out, we will kill them and you too."

The Angels, hearing this, opened the door a little, and Lot ran in just in time, for the men were about to seize him. At once the crowd began to push and press upon the house in order to break down the door, when, in a moment, they were all struck blind. They began stumbling and falling over one another, for they could no longer see; and so they went away and left the house alone.

As soon as they were gone, the Angels warned Lot: "Have you anyone here for whom you care besides your daughters? Hurry, bring them with you, and leave this place at once; for we are going to destroy the whole city and kill every one that is in it."

Lot hastened at once to the house of two young men, who were to have married his two daughters. He woke them up: "Hurry, and come with me out of the city, for the Lord is about to destroy it." They thought he was speaking in jest, and would not believe him. "No, we will not leave the city." And they would not go, no matter what he said to them.

There was no time to lose, for it was now near morning. Lot hurried back to his house and, with his wife and two daughters, prepared to leave. "Make haste," the Angels cried, "because we can do nothing until you leave this place; but, remember, do not dare look back when you pass the gate of the city; if you do, you shall die." So they left the city, and coming to the gate, passed through into the

country beyond. But as they were going, Lot's wife, full of curiosity, wishing to see what had happened, stopped and looked back. Hardly had she done so when she gave a loud cry, the breath left her body, and in a moment she turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot dared not stop, as he was still near the city. He hastened on as fast as he could with his two daughters, until they came to a little town some distance off, where he entered and rested.

In the meantime there rose up over the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha a dark red cloud, and from it poured down a fearful storm, not of rain, but of fire and brimstone; everything was burned up, and every man and woman and child was killed.

Far off in the distance, on that same morning, Abraham, going out from his tent, looked towards the two cities, and saw the ashes rise up from the earth, like the smoke of a furnace; and this was all that was left of those wicked cities and of the people that dwelt in them, save Lot and his daughters, who alone escaped.

Not long after, Abraham moved again and came into the country of a certain king, some distance away.

This king, not knowing that Sara was his wife, took her away from Abraham; but God sent a sickness upon his household, just as he had done to Pharaoh of Egypt; and that night He said to the king: "Send back the woman to Abraham, for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for you and you shall live; but if you will not restore her, you shall surely die, you and all your household."

The king, being afraid, sent for Abraham at once,



THE SACRIFICE OF ABRAHAM.



and gave him back his wife, making him many presents of slaves and of sheep and oxen.

Abraham was now a hundred years old; and for a long while he lived in the country of this king, who was good and kind to him and always treated him well. In the meantime, to his great joy, a son was born, and he gave him the name of Isaac.

Isaac grew up to be a beautiful boy. Abraham loved him dearly, especially because he was the only child.

One day God said to the father: "I know that you love your son; but now you must take the child and go to a certain place that I shall show you; there you shall kill the boy and offer him as a gift to Me."

Tenderly as he loved his child, Abraham loved God more; and so, that very night, he arose, took the boy, and traveled for three days till he came to a mountain that God had shown him. Going up into the mountain with Isaac, he built there an altar of wood; then, taking his son, he bound the boy's hands and placed him on the altar, and drew out his sword to kill him. Just as he was about to strike, an Angel from Heaven cried out: "Abraham!" and he answered: "Here I am." "Lay not your hand on the boy," said the Angel, "and do him no harm. Now I know that you fear God and love Him, because you did not spare your only son, but would have killed him in obedience to the command of God. Go back home with your child; for thus saith the Lord: 'Because you have obeyed Me, I will bless you and your son, and you shall be the father of a great nation, who will possess all this country, and will be My chosen people.' "

So Abraham and Isaac returned to their home, and lived in peace and happiness for many years.

After some time had passed, Sara, being now old and feeble, died at the age of 127 years, and was buried in a large cave that Abraham bought from the people of the land for four hundred pieces of silver.

Deeply did he mourn for his wife, whom he loved so much, and who had been so faithful to him in all his wanderings from place to place; and often would he go to her grave to weep and to pray, and thus passed many more years.

And the days of Abraham's life were 175 years; and when he died at this good old age he was buried in the same cave with Sara, his wife, near Hebron, in the land of Chanaan.

ISAAC.

I must tell you now the history of Isaac after his return from the mountain where he was taken to be killed.

For many years he lived in peace and quiet with his mother and father, their only child. When he was grown up his father wished to find for him a wife, not among the people where he dwelt, but from his own kindred in the country of Haran.

Now, Abraham had in his house an old servant whom he trusted in all things. One day he called this servant, and said to him: "Take with you many servants and camels and presents of different kinds,



REBECCA AT THE WELL.



and go to the city of Haran, where my father used to live. You must seek there a wife for my son Isaac, and do not return until you have found her."

At once the servant set out on his long journey, and, traveling many days, came at last to the city of Haran. He stood near a well just outside the city, wondering how he could find a wife for his master's son among these strangers. He prayed that God would help him: "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, help me today to find a good wife for Isaac. Behold, I stand near the spring, and the young maidens of the city will come out soon to draw water. When I say to them, 'Give me some water to drink,' let the one that answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also,' be the one whom you have chosen for Isaac." Hardly had he finished his prayer, when out of the gate of the city came a beautiful young girl. She went over to the well where the servant was standing. "Young woman," he cried out, "give me some water to drink." Quickly filling her pitcher, she gave it to him, saying: "Let me give water to your camels also." "Tell me whose daughter you are," said the servant. "My father's name is Bathuel, son of Nachor, and my name is Rebecca," she answered. The servant knew at once that this Nachor, Rebecca's grandfather, was Abraham's own brother, and he thanked God, Who had heard his prayer, thus guiding him to the home of his master's kindred. "But why do you stand here, outside the city?" asked Rebecca: "There is plenty of room in my father's home. Come in and rest for a while, and then you may go on your journey."

So the servant came to the house, and Bathuel,

Rebecca's father, went out to meet him and bid him welcome.

That evening a great supper was prepared; but just as they were about to sit down, the servant spoke: "I will not eat till I have told you why I have come on this journey. I am the servant of Abraham, your uncle; and he sent me here, to this city of Haran, to find for his son Isaac a wife among his kindred. The very first person I met was your daughter Rebecca. Will you give me the girl to be Isaac's wife?" The father thought for a while, then answered: "This word has come from God, and it is His will. The girl is before you; take her for the wife of Isaac, for I know his father, Abraham, to be a good and great man, and the son of such a man will be a good husband for my daughter." Then they sat down to supper, and they feasted and made merry till far into the night.

The next day the servant prepared to depart. They called Rebecca, and asked her if she wished to go. She consented, and soon they started on the journey home, and so, after many days, came back to Hebron, where Abraham and his son were living.

When Isaac saw Rebecca he loved her dearly, for she was both good and beautiful; and they were married with great feasting and joy.

They lived happily together for many years, and Abraham died, knowing that the blessing of God rested on his son, as had been promised.

Isaac was gentle and retiring, and cared not to wander from place to place, but remained at Hebron, living a quiet, peaceful life.

After a while two sons were born to them, Esau and Jacob. Esau was rude in manner, and the skin

of his body was rough and red and hairy. Jacob was gentle and affectionate in disposition, and a beautiful boy. In the course of time the two grew up to manhood. Esau became a skilful hunter, and Jacob tended the flocks and herds.

Esau was his father's favorite, but Rebecca loved Jacob more, for he was gentle and loving, and always devoted to his mother.

One day Esau went out into the fields, and was gone all day. When evening came he returned, faint with hunger. He saw Jacob boiling some pottage, and asked him for some. At first Jacob refused; then he said to Esau: "You are older than I, and when our father is about to die, you will receive his blessing and inheritance, because you are the first born. Now give me the right to that, and you may have all the pottage you want." "What good will my right to our father's blessing do me now," answered Esau, "when I am nearly dying of hunger? Give me the pottage, and you may have the blessing." So Jacob gave him all he wished. Esau ate his fill and went away, with little thought of what he had done; but he took good care not to tell his father.

Some time after, there came a great famine into all that country, and Isaac and his family were forced to leave. At first he thought to go down into Egypt; but God came to him one night and warned him: "Go not into Egypt, but go whither I shall tell you and remain there."

So he went to the country of the Palestines and dwelt there many days, and in the course of time he became very prosperous. The people of that country were envious, however, not liking to see

this stranger grow rich in their midst. To show their spite they stopped up all the wells and springs, so that Isaac could find no water for his cattle to drink; and when he digged other wells, the people drove him away. The king himself came and told him to leave his country, for he was becoming too rich and powerful. Isaac departed from there and went into another part of the land. But God was with him and would not let him come to harm. One night he appeared to him and comforted him: "I am the God of Abraham, your father; do not fear, for I am with you; I will bless you, and will always protect you."

Isaac remained, therefore, in that place, and built an altar to the Lord. And after some days, the king came to him and said: "I see that you are under the protection of God, and no one can hurt you. Let us be friends and live in peace with each other." They made a great feast; and the next day the king returned home, and never troubled Isaac any more.

So, for many years he lived in that place. After a while he began to grow old and feeble; his eyes were dim and he could not see.

One day he called Esau, his eldest son, and said to him: "My son, I am growing old, and know not the day of my death, nor how soon it may come. Before I die, I wish to taste again of your hunting. Go, bring me the game you have caught, and cook it for me, that I may eat it and bless you before I die."

I must tell you that the blessing Isaac spoke of was given only to the eldest son; he who received it would be, at his father's death, the head of the family, and would inherit all his riches and possessions.

It happened that Rebecca was listening behind the door, whilst Isaac was speaking, and she heard all that was said.

As soon as Esau had gone, she went quickly to Jacob and told him: "My son, go to the pasture and get me two of the best kids out of the flock, that I may cook some meat for your father, such as he likes." Jacob obeyed at once and brought the kids to his mother, who prepared them for the table. "Now," she said, "Take this dish to your father; and when he has eaten it, he will give the blessing to you instead of to Esau; for your brother sold it to you and you have a right to it." Then she dressed him in Esau's clothing, and covered his neck and hands with the skin of the kids, that he might seem rough and hairy.

Jacob, dressed like his brother, came into his father's tent, bringing the meat his mother had prepared.

Hearing the footsteps, Isaac cried out: "Who is this coming in?" Jacob answered: "I am Esau, your eldest son. I have done as you commanded me; and now I have brought you some good meat that I know you will like."

"Come here, my son," said Isaac, "that I may know if you are really Esau." He felt his hands and neck, and they were rough and hairy, as Esau was. "The voice, indeed, is the voice of Jacob, but these are the hands of Esau. Are you really my son Esau?" "I am," answered Jacob. "Then give me the meat, that I may eat it." After he had eaten, he kissed his son and blessed him.

Hardly had he done so, and Jacob had left the tent, when Esau came in. Going up to his father,

he called to him: "Arise, father, and eat, for I have brought you the meat from my hunting." "What is this?" cried Isaac, "Who are you?" "Why, I am Esau, your eldest son." "How can that be? Who was it then, that, a few moments ago, brought me meat, and I ate it, and I gave him my blessing? He said he was my eldest son."

When Esau heard this he cried out: "It was Jacob who deceived you and received the blessing that belonged to me. But, father, give me the blessing." "My son," he answered, "I cannot. I have given it, and cannot take it away. Jacob has received it, and now it must be his. I have made him master over you and your house; and so it must be."

And from that day Esau hated his brother and determined to kill him as soon as an opportunity would come.

Rebecca suspected this. One day she warned Jacob: "Your brother will kill you when he gets a chance; you must leave here for a time. Take my advice. Go to my brother, who lives in Haran, and stay there till Esau's anger be over; then I shall send for you to come home." So Jacob went away, and he dwelt in Haran for many years.

After some time, Isaac moved back to Hebron, where his father Abraham had lived; and he dwelt there for a long time in peace and quiet, but always hoping to see Jacob again before he died.

And so he did, for after many days, Jacob came home; and his father and brother both welcomed him back, for Esau had forgotten his anger against him.

Not long after, Isaac grew weaker and weaker, for he was now 180 years old; and with both his



JACOB'S DREAM.



sons at his bedside, he died and was buried in the great cave near Hebron, with Rebecca his wife, by the side of his father and mother.

JACOB.

Now we come to the story of Jacob's life after he left his father's home, to escape his brother's anger. You remember Jacob had gotten the blessing intended for his older brother, and Esau was so angry he but awaited a chance to kill him.

Knowing this, Rebecca called Jacob one day and said to him: "Your brother does not love you, and even wishes to kill you when the chance will come. It is better for you to leave here for a while, until his anger is over. Go to your uncle Laban, who lives in Haran." Jacob obeyed his mother, and, having obtained his father's consent, set out on his journey.

He traveled all day long, and when evening came, he was tired. Throwing himself on the ground, he was soon fast asleep. And as he slept, he saw a wonderful vision, a great ladder reaching from the ground up to the sky. On this ladder the angels of God were going up and down; the Lord Himself was leaning upon the top of the ladder, and He spoke to Jacob: "I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac, your father. The land on which you are now sleeping I will give to you and to your children. Be not afraid, for I will be with you on your journey and I will bring you back safely to your father and to

your home." Jacob woke up, trembling, but he was greatly comforted when he remembered that God had told him He would take care of him and see that he came to no harm. He continued his journey, and at last arrived at the city of Haran, where his Uncle Laban lived. He sat down by a well near the gate of the city, and, seeing some shepherds near by, he asked them: "Do you know a certain Laban, who lives in this place?" "Of course we do," they replied; "he is a rich man and well known in the city, and here comes a daughter of his now; her name is Rachel." Indeed, as they were speaking, there came toward the well a beautiful young maiden, with a flock of sheep which she was bringing to water. Jacob, knowing then that she was his cousin, went up to her and kissed her, telling her he was the nephew of Laban, her father. Rachel was glad, and hurried back home to tell her father, who came out to meet Jacob and brought him into his house, and there they feasted and made merry for many days.

Now Laban had two daughters—Lia, who was blar-eyed and ugly, and Rachel, who was very beautiful.

Jacob loved Rachel, and one day he said to her father: "I will work for you seven years if you will give me Rachel for my wife." Laban agreed to this, and for seven long years Jacob took care of his uncle's cattle and sheep.

At last the seven years came to an end. Laban made a great feast; and that evening he gave to Jacob for his wife, not Rachel, as he had promised, but Lia, the blar-eyed daughter.

Jacob was very much displeased at this; but what



JACOB IN THE HOUSE OF LABAN.

could he do? He was in his uncle's power. He was obliged to take the young woman, but he complained to Laban, "Why have you deceived me? I have worked hard for you during all these years, and you said you would give me Rachel." "Lia is the older of the two," answered Laban; "and it is the custom in this country to give the older first. But if you will promise to work for me seven years more, I will give you Rachel."

Jacob promised; then he and Rachel were married, and for seven years more he worked for his uncle. When the time had elapsed, he proposed to Laban: "I will work for you six years more if, at the end of that time, you will divide your cattle and sheep between us. Give me all that are speckled and spotted; and all that are of one color, either white or black, keep for yourself." Laban agreed to this, for he thought that his share would be the larger; but when the six years were over, Jacob had more than his uncle. And now Jacob made up his mind to leave the city and go back to his father, Isaac, whom he had not seen for twenty years. So, one day, he quietly gathered together all his possessions, and, with Rachel and Lia, set out secretly on his journey towards home.

He had not gone far before Laban, discovering his absence, went in pursuit, and soon was about to overtake him.

Laban stopped to rest for the night, however, and, whilst asleep, heard a voice: "See to it that you speak not anything harsh against Jacob, nor do him any harm." He knew it was the voice of God, and was afraid.

The next day he overtook his nephew and re-

proached him mildly: "Why did you run away from me like a thief? I can take away from you everything you have, if I wish, and bring you back by force. But God warned me last night to do nothing against you. Go, therefore, on your journey in peace." With these words, Laban departed, and Jacob continued his journey towards his father's home.

As he came nearer, he began to grow afraid, for he did not know how Esau would receive him. He sent messengers to his brother to say that he was coming to see him. They returned with the news that Esau was on his way with an army of four hundred men. At this, Jacob was still more afraid. He divided his flocks and herds into two parts, for he thought that if one were destroyed, the other might be saved. Again he sent messengers to his brother with many presents, and early the next morning prepared to go on. He waited till every one, servants and all, had gone before him; and when he was alone, he knelt down and prayed that God would protect him against his brother's anger. Whilst he was praying, an Angel, in the form of a man, came down from heaven. Jacob caught hold of him and held him till break of day: "Let me go," cried the Angel, "for it is now morning." "I will not let you go," was the answer, "till you bless me." And the Angel blessed him and promised that no man would harm him: "For," he said, "if you have been strong against me, how much stronger will you be against a man!" Saying this, he disappeared.

The sun had now risen, and Jacob went forward, walking behind the rest with Rachel, his wife. They had not gone far when, in the distance, he saw his

brother's army coming towards him. Nearer and nearer they came. He could see his brother at their head, and he was afraid to move or speak. But Esau ran up to him and embraced him, clasping him fast about the neck and weeping for joy; for God had changed his heart. Long ago he had forgotten all his hatred and anger, and he loved his brother now and was glad to see him again. And from that day they were good friends and loved each other as brothers should. But Jacob could not yet see his father, because God commanded him to go to Bethel, instead, and remain there a while.

Now Bethel was the same spot where Jacob slept one night when fleeing from his brother, and in his sleep saw the Angels of God going up and down the great ladder that stretched from earth to heaven.

When he arrived there this time, God appeared to him again, and told him he was no longer to be called Jacob, but his name would now be Israel, and it is after him the Jews are also called Israelites. And God added: "I am Almighty God. Nations and peoples shall come from you; and the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give also to you and to your children."

This promise was fulfilled hundreds of years after. For Jacob had twelve sons, and from them came the twelve tribes of Israel, who afterwards conquered all the land of Palestine and became a great and powerful nation.

After some time Jacob left Bethel and came to Bethlehem, and there Rachel was taken sick and died. Her husband mourned over her many days, for he loved her faithfully. He built a great column over her grave at Bethlehem before leaving that

place. When at last he came to his father's home in Hebron, there was a happy meeting. Isaac wept with joy as his son knelt at his feet, after an absence of so many years, and he begged him not to leave him again. So Jacob remained; and not very long after, Isaac died and was buried in Hebron by the side of Rebecca, his wife.

Esau lived some distance away, but Jacob remained in the land of Chanaan for many years.

Among his twelve sons there was one named Joseph, whom he loved above all the rest. I shall have many things to tell you in another story about this son and all that happened to him. But this much I must tell you now, that his brothers hated him through envy, and one day they sold him to some merchants, who were going to Egypt; then, coming, they told their father he had been killed by a wild beast. Jacob mourned for a long time over his son, thinking him to be dead.

After some years had passed, a great famine came into all the country around and the people could get no bread to eat; but they were told that in Egypt they could buy all they wanted, for there was plenty there.

So Jacob sent his sons into Egypt with a sum of money to buy wheat. To their great surprise, they learned that Joseph was living there and was a friend of the king.

On their return they told their father that Joseph was in Egypt, and had sent for him to come there and live. As the famine continued, Jacob made up his mind to go, without delay, and taking his family and his goods, he set out on the journey. One night whilst he was resting on the way, God spoke to him:

"Fear not; but go down into Egypt. I will be with you there and will bring you back again; and from you a great nation will come." Jacob continued on his way, and at last reached Egypt. Joseph went out to meet him. When he saw his father in the distance, he ran, and falling into his arms, kissed him, weeping for joy.

Joseph brought his father and brothers to a beautiful country called Gessen, in the land of Egypt, where there were large pastures for their flocks and herds. After a while he took his father to see the king, who was very kind to him. Among other things, the king asked Jacob how old he was. "The days of my pilgrimage on earth are 130 years, few and evil," was Jacob's answer; "and they are not come up to the days of my fathers." Then Pharaoh gave him many presents, and dismissed him in peace.

Jacob remained with his sons in the land of Gessen, and Joseph came often to see him from Pharaoh's court. When, seventeen years later, he was about to die, he sent for Joseph and, with all his children around him, he blessed them and told them many things that would happen in the years to come. And he added: "I am dying now; but swear to me that when I am dead, you will take my body away from here and bury me in the cave at Hebron, where my father Isaac and my mother lie buried." They promised, and he closed his eyes and peacefully died.

Joseph reverently bent down over his father's face, caressing the grey locks, weeping and kissing him. Then he commanded his servants to embalm the body. After mourning for him forty days, Jacob's sons set out with a great number of friends

and servants for the land of Chanaan; and there they buried him by the side of Isaac and Rebecca, in the cave at Hebron.

JOSEPH.

Among the twelve sons of Jacob there was one, as you will remember, whose name was Joseph. He was kind and gentle in manner, like his mother, Rachel. Jacob loved him above all his other sons, and to show his love gave him a beautiful coat of bright and pretty colors. His brothers, seeing this, were full of envy and hatred, and ill-treated and abused him whenever they could. This made Joseph very sad, but he would not quarrel with them, for he loved not strife nor anger, and he prayed that God would change their hearts.

One night he had a strange dream; "As I was asleep," he told them, "I thought in my dream that we were binding sheaves of wheat in the field. My sheaf arose and stood up straight, but your sheaves stood around mine and were bowing down before it."

This made the brothers still more angry: "What do you mean?" they cried out, "Are you going to be our master? And will we be subject to you and obliged to obey you?"

Not long after that he told them of another dream. "During the night, whilst I was fast asleep, I saw in my dream the sun and the moon and eleven stars, and they began to worship me."



JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.



At this even his father rebuked him. "My son, what does this mean? Shall I and your mother and your brothers worship you?"

It happened that sometime afterwards, the sons of Jacob were tending their flocks at a distance, but Joseph stayed at home with his father. Jacob sent him to see how his brothers were getting along. Joseph at once set out to seek his brothers, and found them after two or three days' search.

Seeing him in the distance, they said one to another: "Here is the dreamer coming; let us kill him, and then we shall see what good his dreams will do him. We can tell his father that some wild beast devoured him; he will never know the truth." But one of them, Reuben, did not wish to have the boy killed. "No, do not kill him," he exclaimed. "Remember he is your brother. Would you stain your hands in your brother's blood? See, here is a dry well; let us put him in it and keep him there." He said this, because he meant, when night was come, to take Joseph out of the pit and send him home.

They agreed to this; and as soon as Joseph had come up to speak to them, they seized him, took away his coat of pretty colors, and threw him into the pit. Then they sat down to take their dinner, and whilst they were eating, there came along some merchants on their way to Egypt. Seeing these men, an idea came to Juda, one of the brothers, and he said to the rest: "What is the good of killing our brother? Let us sell him to these merchants and divide the money among us."

This pleased them; so they pulled Joseph out of the pit and told him what they were going to do.

The boy began to cry, and begged them not to take him away from his home and his father: "Remember I am your brother; and if you do this wicked thing, God will punish you." They would not listen to him; but, calling the merchants, they sold Joseph for twenty pieces of silver. The merchants took the boy, still crying and pleading, and, setting him on one of the beasts, continued on their way to Egypt.

In the meantime, Reuben, who was not present when this took place, went over to the pit to look for Joseph. Not finding him, he asked: "What have you done with the boy?" "There is no use in your looking for him," they answered, "for you will never see him again." And they told him what they had done. Then they took Joseph's coat and dipped it in the blood of a kid they had just killed, after which they sent it by a messenger to their father, saying: "We found this coat all covered with blood in a field not far from where our flocks were feeding, and we thought it might be Joseph's coat." The father recognized it at once, and cried out in his grief: "It is my son's coat; a wild beast has devoured him; my son is killed!"

The brothers soon came home and tried to console their father, pretending they were sorry Joseph was dead. But Jacob would not be comforted: "Leave me alone," he cried. "I shall go down to the grave in sorrow and tears, for my son is dead, killed by a wild beast."

In the meantime, the merchants who had bought Joseph, went on their journey, and at last came into Egypt, where they sold the boy to a man named Putiphar, a friend of the king, and the captain of all his soldiers.

But God was with Joseph and took good care of him. He soon found favor with Putiphar, who placed him in charge of all his household. And he did so well that his master grew richer and richer, and God blessed him for the sake of Joseph; and so all things went on well for quite a while.

Now Putiphar had a wife who was a very bad woman; she hated Joseph because he was good and virtuous. One day she went to her husband and falsely accused Joseph of a very wicked crime. The man believed his wife, and in his anger threw Joseph into prison; and there he remained for a long, long time. After a short while, though, the keeper of the prison, who had taken a great liking to Joseph, put him in charge of all the prisoners.

Now it happened that in this same prison, and at this time, there were two men who had displeased the king; one was his chief butler, and the other his chief baker.

As Joseph was tending the prisoners, he came one morning to give them their breakfast, and he noticed that these two men were more sad and downcast than before. He asked them why they were so sad that morning. They told him that each of them the night before had had a strange dream they could not understand, and were afraid. "What were your dreams?" said Joseph; "perhaps I can tell you what they mean. God knows all things, and He may let me know their meaning."

The chief butler told his dream first: "I was in a sound sleep, and I saw a vine before me, and on this vine were three branches. After a while the buds appeared, then the blossoms, and then the ripe grapes. The cup of Pharaoh was in my hand. I took the

grapes and pressed the juice out of them into the cup, and offered it to the king, then I woke up." Joseph answered him: "This is the meaning of your dream. The three branches are yet three days that remain. After they are passed, Pharaoh will remember how faithfully you have served him. He will take you out of this prison and restore you to the position you had before; and you will hold the cup for him again, as you have often done in the days gone by. Only remember me when it will be well with you, and do me the kindness to ask Pharaoh to take me out of this prison; for I was stolen away from my father and my country, and was cast into this prison through no fault of mine."

Then the chief baker told Joseph his dream; and this is what he saw: "I dreamed that I had three baskets upon my head, and in the top basket were all kinds of pastry that I was accustomed to make for the king; and the birds came and ate out of it."

Joseph told him: "This is the meaning of your dream: The three baskets are yet three days. After they are passed, Pharaoh will cut off your head and hang your body on a cross, and the birds of the air will come and eat the flesh of your lifeless body."

Sure enough, three days after this, the king had a great feast, for it was his birthday; and while they were eating and drinking, he remembered his two servants whom he had cast into prison. He sent for the chief butler, brought him back to the palace, and restored him to his place; but, being still angry against the chief baker, he ordered that his head should be cut off and his dead body hung on a cross.

When the chief butler recovered his place, he forgot all about Joseph and let him stay in his prison;

and there he remained for two long years. But God had not forgotten him, as we shall soon see.

After these years had passed, Pharaoh had a strange dream one night. He thought in his dream that he stood by the river; and as he stood, he saw seven cows come out of the water; they were very fat and fine looking, and were feeding in the marshes and swamps near the river. Right after this there came out of the water seven other cows, lean and ugly, and they began feeding on the green grass by the banks of the river; and seeing the fat cows, they went up to them and devoured them. Pharaoh woke up; but soon went to sleep again and had another dream. He was in a field and saw a corn stalk, and out of it grew seven ears of corn, large and fine. Then there came seven other ears, but they were thin and blighted, and they devoured and destroyed all the beauty and ripeness of the first seven. When morning came Pharaoh called all the wise men and magicians and fortune-tellers, and spoke to them about his dreams, but no one could tell him what they meant.

Then the chief butler thought of Joseph, and he said to the king: "You remember, O king, that two years ago, you were angry with me and your chief baker, and you cast us into prison. Now there was at the same time in the prison a young man from Palestine. We related to him one day, a dream we both had, and he told us the answer. It was that I would be restored to your favor, and the chief baker would be put to death; and it happened just as he had said."

When the king heard this, he sent word to have Joseph brought to him. So Joseph was taken out

of the prison and, as he stood before Pharaoh, the king said to him: "I have had two dreams, and there is no one who can tell me what they mean. Can you tell me?" "Only God can know these things," answered Joseph; "but perhaps he will let me know their meaning. What are your dreams?" Pharaoh told him what he had seen in his sleep. "O king," Joseph replied, "The two dreams mean one and the same thing; and by them God has shown you what is about to take place. The seven fat cows and the seven full ears of corn are seven years of plenty that will come upon this land; and the seven lean cows and the seven blighted ears of corn are seven years of famine. So the dream means this: There shall be in all this country seven years of great plenty, when the harvest will be full and all things will grow in abundance. After this will come seven years of a famine so terrible, that all the abundance before shall be forgotten, and the famine shall consume all the land.

Therefore, let the king provide a wise and industrious man, and make him ruler over the land of Egypt, that he may appoint overseers over the whole country who will gather into barns the fifth part of all that grows during the seven years of plenty; and let all the corn be saved and laid up in the cities under Pharaoh's care. Then when the famine comes, we will be prepared for it, and the people will not die of hunger."

This pleased Pharaoh, and he said to Joseph: "Since God has shown you all these things, where shall I find a wiser man than you? Behold I place you now in command of my whole house and make you the ruler of Egypt. All men shall obey you,

and only I shall be above you. Do all that you have said, and you will be the saviour of Egypt." Then he took his own ring and put it on Joseph's finger, and he clothed him in a robe of silk and hung a chain of gold about his neck. He made him ride through the city in a great chariot, next to his own, and a herald went before, crying out: "This is he whom Pharaoh has made governor of all Egypt; let every man obey him."

In truth, what Joseph had said now came to pass. For seven years there was an abundance of everything that grew, of all kinds of grain and grass and fruits. All this while, Joseph was gathering them up in barns and storehouses through all the land of Egypt; and there was so great an abundance, that it was equal to the sand by the seashore. Then the famine came, and everywhere the grass withered, the wheat and the other grains no longer grew.

When the people began to be hungry they cried to the king to give them food; and he told them: "Go to Joseph, do whatever he will say to you, and he will give you food." Joseph opened the storehouses, and sold the grain to the people, and the money he gave to the king, so that he soon became richer than ever. When their money was gone, the people gave their lands to the king for food, and Pharaoh grew more and more prosperous every day.

In the meantime, far off in the country of Palestine, the famine was felt, and the people began to be hungry. Jacob heard they were selling corn in Egypt, and sent his sons to purchase some. His youngest son, Benjamin, he kept at home, fearing that some evil might happen to him. The brothers, taking money to buy whatever was needed, set out

on their journey. On their arrival they went at once to the governor. No sooner did Joseph see them than he recognized his brothers, but he pretended not to know them. And so greatly had he changed in appearance, that they did not dream this was their own brother, whom they had sold many years before.

Joseph determined to try them and see if their hearts were changed. So he spoke roughly: "Who are you, and whence do you come?" "We are from the land of Palestine, and our father's name is Jacob. We have come here to buy corn, for the famine is in our land." "That is not so," said Joseph; "you are spies, and you have come to find out all about our country, to go back and tell your master."

"Oh no, my lord," they answered; "we are peaceable men, and have come simply to buy food. Our father is an old man, and we left him and his youngest son at home, for he would not let the boy come, lest some evil should happen to him on the way." "If what you say is true, go back to your father and bring your young brother to me, that I may see him. I shall keep one of you here in prison until the others return; if you bring back the boy, I shall believe you."

Then they were in great fear, and knew not what to do; and they said one to another: "We deserve to suffer this, because we sinned against Joseph when we sold him to the merchants; and when he cried and begged us not to let him go, we would not listen."

They did not know that Joseph understood every word they spoke; but he did, of course, and he was

pleased, since it showed they were sorry for the evil they had done.

He commanded one of them, Simeon, to be cast into prison. Then he filled their sacks with wheat, all they could carry, and in the top of each sack he put back the money they had given in payment. "Go back to your father, now," he said. "When you return with the boy, I will release Simeon. But if you do not bring back your young brother, you cannot come here again." The brothers set out on the journey home, but they had not gone far, when one of them, happening to open his sack, found the money. Then all of them opened their sacks, and there, on the top, lay the very money they had paid out for the corn. They did not know what to make of it, and asked each other what it could mean.

At last they arrived home and told their father all that had happened.

Jacob listened in astonishment. "Alas!" he cried out, "what have you done? Joseph is dead, Simeon a captive, and now you will take Benjamin away. I will not let him go." "Father," said Reuben, "Let the boy go with me. I will bring him back to you safe and sound." But Jacob would not let him go.

After a while they had eaten up all the corn, and Jacob bade them go down again into Egypt, to buy some more.

"We dare not go into Egypt again," they said, "without the boy, for the governor told us: 'Unless you bring your youngest brother, you shall not see my face again.'" Still Jacob refused. Then Juda said: "Father, let Benjamin come with me. I will take care of him; and I will die, rather than let any harm come to him." At last Jacob consented and

sent them with the boy and with many presents for the ruler.

They came again into Egypt and asked to see the governor. But they were afraid, too, and said to the steward of the house: "Sir, we came down here once before to buy food, and paid for it; but when we were returning home, we found the money in our sacks. We know not how it came there, so we have brought it back to you."

"Do not be afraid," the steward answered, "it was God who gave it to you, for I have the money you paid."

They went in then to see the ruler. Joseph treated them courteously, and when he saw Benjamin he kissed him, then hurried out of the room, for he could not keep back his tears. When he returned he brought with him Simeon, whom he restored to his brothers, and they all sat down to a great feast prepared for them.

In the meantime Joseph commanded his steward to fill their sacks again, and to put back the money they paid for the corn. But in Benjamin's sack he put his own silver cup, and sent them away on their journey home.

Hardly had they left the city when Joseph despatched his steward after them, who overtook them, crying out; "Why have you stolen my master's silver cup?" They denied it indignantly: "We are not thieves; we have not stolen the cup. If you find it in our sacks, we are willing that the man with whom it is found shall die, and we will all be the slaves of the governor."

They opened their sacks, and the steward looked first into one, then into another; when he came to



JOSEPH MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN TO HIS BRETHREN.



Benjamin's sack, he found the cup. At this they all cried out in wonder and fear, and returned at once to the city. Juda went up to Joseph: "Sir, he said, "we do not know how this happened, for neither the boy nor we had taken your cup. When I asked my father to let his youngest son come with me, I promised that no evil would happen to him. And now, I beseech you, let me be your slave, and let the boy go home." "Not so," said Joseph; "but he shall be my slave in whose sack the cup was found." Then they all besought him most earnestly not to punish the boy, but to punish them in his stead. At this Joseph could no longer keep back his tears, for he saw that their hearts were changed. "Be not afraid," he said, "I am Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt; you are my brothers and Jacob is my own dear father. It was God who sent me into this country, that your lives might be saved and you have food to eat. God has protected me and made me, as it were, a father to Pharaoh, lord of his whole house and governor in all the land of Egypt.

"Hasten back to my father, and tell him: 'Your son Joseph is living, and is lord of the whole land of Egypt. He sends for you to come to him and to make your home with him, for there are five more years of this famine still to come. He will feed you and give you the best there is in the land.'"

When they heard this they were overjoyed, and, crowding around him, they begged with tears that he would forgive the cruel sin they had committed against him. Joseph kissed them and again bade them not to be afraid, for it was the will of God that he should be sent into Egypt to save them from the famine that was to come.

Pharao heard that Joseph's brothers had arrived in Egypt. He was glad, and gave orders to them: "Go back into your country and bring your father here; the best the land can give shall be his and yours."

The sons of Jacob did as they were bidden. They returned to Chanaan and told their father all that had happened; that Joseph was living and was the ruler in all the land of Egypt, second only to the king. "I will go to my son," said Jacob, "that I may see him again before I die."

They all set out on their journey forthwith. As they were resting one night on their way, God appeared to Jacob, telling him not to fear, but to go down into Egypt, so that Jacob felt still more encouraged. When he came into the country of Gessen, a part of Egypt, Joseph met him, and falling on his father's neck, he kissed him and wept for joy, for he loved him dearly, and for many a long year had hoped and prayed to see him once more.

Joseph took his father and brothers without delay to see the king, whereupon Pharao gave orders that they were to have the whole land of Gessen to live in and there tend their flocks and herds, and during the rest of the famine, Joseph fed them and gave them all they could wish for.

All this while Joseph lived at the court of Pharao, but often went out to Gessen to see his father and brothers. After seventeen years had passed, when Jacob was about to die, Joseph came to him, watched over him in his last days, and, when death came, closed his eyes, dutifully and lovingly.

For forty days they mourned for Jacob; and when the days were over, Joseph and his brothers took

their father's body out of Egypt, back into the land of Palestine; and there they buried him by the side of Abraham and Isaac.

When they returned into Egypt, the brothers began to be afraid, and they said one to another: "Now that our father is dead, Joseph will remember the evil we once did him, and he will be revenged on us." So they went to him and begged that he would do them no harm. He answered them kindly and gently: "Do not be afraid. It is true, you thought evil against me, but God turned it into good; and why should I desire revenge when God has been so kind to me? No, no! I shall do you no harm; long ago I have forgotten the evil you did. I shall feed you and your children, and take good care of you as long as I live."

Joseph kept his promise. For many years he continued to live at Pharaoh's court, and was married and had children and grandchildren. He lived to the age of 110 years. When he felt that he was about to die, he called his brothers and said to them: "Many years after my death, your children and your grandchildren will become a great nation, and God will take them out of Egypt, back into the country from which we came. When this comes to pass, see that my bones are taken away, that I, too, may rest near my father, in the land of my birth." Saying this, he died; and his body was placed in a coffin, to rest in Egypt until the day when God would call his people back into the land from which they came, the land of Palestine.

JOB.

A long time ago, in the days of the patriarchs of old, there lived in the country of Arabia, in the land of Hus, a very wealthy man whose name was Job. He had many thousands of sheep and camels and oxen, and lived in comfort and ease in the bosom of a large and happy family.

He was renowned among all the people of the land for his wisdom and his riches. He was a good and charitable man, always ready to help anyone in sorrow or distress; he was a father to the orphan, and a protector to the widow.

And now God determined to try him to see if he would serve Him faithfully in the midst of misfortune and suffering, as he had done in the days of prosperity; so He allowed Satan to afflict him sorely.

One day whilst Job was resting quietly in his home, a messenger came up in great haste, covered with sweat and dust, and cried out: "Alas, my master! the robbers have stolen all your oxen and mules and have killed the servants who were tending them, and I alone have escaped to tell you."

He was yet speaking when another messenger came in great haste: "O master! the lightning has struck your flocks of sheep and the servants who were keeping them. All are killed. I alone have escaped to tell you."

Hardly had this man finished when up came another messenger: "O master! the robbers have stolen all your camels and killed your servants. I alone have escaped."

At the same moment another came rushing in, hardly able to speak:

"Master, your sons and daughters were feasting in the house of their eldest brother. During the banquet a fierce wind blew against the house, and down it fell, burying in its ruins all that were seated at the table. I alone have escaped to tell you; all the rest are dead."

At this, Job arose from his seat and fell prostrate on the ground, so great was his grief. Yet he would not murmur against God, but only exclaimed: "God gave me all these things; they were His and belonged to Him. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

So in one short day, he lost everything he had; cattle and sheep, servants and all, even his children.

But this was not to be the end, for God determined to try him still harder, to see if he would murmur against Him. He struck him with a terrible disease. Sores came out all over his body, his limbs and joints became swollen and stiff, and every nerve in his body was racked with pain. The sight of the sores and the odor that came from them were unbearable. His very friends thrust him out of the city, and he was obliged to rest his weary body on an ash heap where all the refuse of the town was cast. Whilst he sat there bemoaning his sad lot, his wife came to him; but, instead of consoling him with tender loving words, she began to upbraid him: "How foolish you are still to trust in God. See what He has done for you. Why do you not curse Him and die?"

Job, not in anger, but meekly and in patience, answered: "You have spoken like a foolish woman.

If we have received good things from God, why not evil things? God is just!"

The news of Job's terrible misfortunes spread far and wide, as he was well known throughout all the land.

Now there lived afar off in another part of the country, three princes or chiefs who were friends of Job.

When they heard what had befallen him, they made up their minds to come and console him.

So they set out on their long journey, and came to the town where he lived. They beheld near the walls, seated on a heap of rubbish, the figure of a man. Coming nearer, they saw that he was a horrible sight, covered with hideous running sores, his face dark, disfigured and drawn with pain; and the dogs were licking his sores.

To their horror, they recognized their friend Job. So great was their grief that they could not speak: they sat on the ground near by, and for seven days opened not their mouths to utter a word.

At last, in his pain and sorrow, Job cried out: "Have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord has touched me. My very wife has abhorred my breath; my kinsmen have forsaken me; and all that knew me have forgotten me. Would that I had never been born, or had died as soon as I saw the light of day, for then I would have been spared these miseries. And now I look for death, as one that digs for a treasure, and it will not come to me; but I must live on and suffer these awful things."

Then one of the three friends, the eldest, spoke, but instead of giving comfort to Job, he said:



JOB AND HIS FRIENDS.



"Surely you must have done some very wicked thing, for God is just, and He would not punish you so terribly unless you were a great sinner. Acknowledge that you have done evil and that you deserve all these things."

And so spoke the other two.

"No," answered Job, "God knows all things, and He knows that I love Him, and that I have tried to serve Him. He knows that my heart is pure and my hands clean of evil. He has made me suffer, not to punish me, but to try me."

And he added: "I know that God will reward me for what I am suffering now. For on the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my flesh, no longer covered with sores; and with these same eyes I shall see God in heaven. I have this hope and comfort that no one can take from me."

Whilst they were speaking these things, another friend of Job came on the scene, a young man named Eliu; and he spoke also, saying: "You are all wrong. God makes men suffer as Job is suffering to keep them from doing evil, or if they have done wrong, to make them repent and return to Him."

At this point, God Himself spoke from heaven, and declared that the three friends of Job were entirely wrong when they said he was wicked, and, therefore, was punished; but the truth of the whole matter was this, that his sufferings were but a trial to prove his patience and his virtue, and that one can serve and please God as well, and even better, in adversity as in prosperity.

Then the Lord spoke also to the three friends: "I am angry with you, for you have not said what was

right. If you wish to be forgiven, go to My servant Job and beg him to pray for you. If he asks Me to forgive you, I will do so."

And so they did, and God was appeased.

Now the trials of Job were about to end. God had seen his patience in the midst of so great suffering, and was pleased with him because of his firm faith and resignation.

The sores on his body began to dry up and heal, and soon he was as well as ever. Then all his friends came to him again, and each one brought him a present.

The Lord gave him great possessions of camels and sheep and oxen; moreover, He gave him seven sons, and for daughters, three of the most beautiful young women that were ever seen.

Job was now rich and happy again, and lived in the possession of all these goods until his death.

He was nearly two hundred years old when that occurred; and he was mourned by all his family and the great number who knew and loved him.

MOSES IN EGYPT.

Once upon a time there reigned in the land of Egypt a wicked and cruel king, whose name was Pharaoh. In a part of his kingdom called Gessen, as has been told in an earlier story, dwelt a tribe of people who were strangers there. Some four hundred years before, when another Pharaoh was king, they had come from the country of Palestine in the time of a great famine, and had settled in

Egypt with Jacob their father. At that time they were only a few, but in the course of years they became more and more numerous till, at last, they numbered over a million souls. These strangers, who were called Hebrews, or Jews, were different from the people around them; they loved and served the true God, whom the Egyptians did not even know. So the people of that country began finally to hate the Hebrews, and ill-treat them in every way they could. The king forced them to work as slaves, building cities and houses and forts, and he put officers over them to watch them and compel them to work. The officers were cruel and heartless, and would beat the poor Hebrews; and those that were weak and sick and could not work, they put to death. But in spite of this, the Hebrews increased in numbers every day. At last the king was alarmed; he was afraid they would become too powerful, and would take his kingdom away from him; so he gave orders that all the babies who were boys should be cast into the river and drowned. Dreadful as it was, this wicked command was obeyed. As soon as it was found that a child was born among the Hebrews, the soldiers of the king came, and if it were a boy, they cast him into the river in spite of the cries and tears of the mother. And so things went on for several years.

Now, there lived at this time among the Jews, a man and wife who had a most beautiful child, a boy only a few days old. For several months they successfully hid him from the soldiers; at last they could hide him no longer. So the mother made a basket of the bullrushes that grew by the river's bank, and, putting the child in it, she set the basket

afloat upon the water, praying that God would take care of the little one and see that he came to no harm.

It happened that just at this time, Pharaoh's daughter went down to the river bank to bathe; and seeing the little basket floating on the water, she had it brought to her. She cried out in astonishment at sight of such a pretty baby, with its hands stretched out to her, and she loved the little one for its beauty. Immediately she made up her mind to take the child home to adopt as her own.

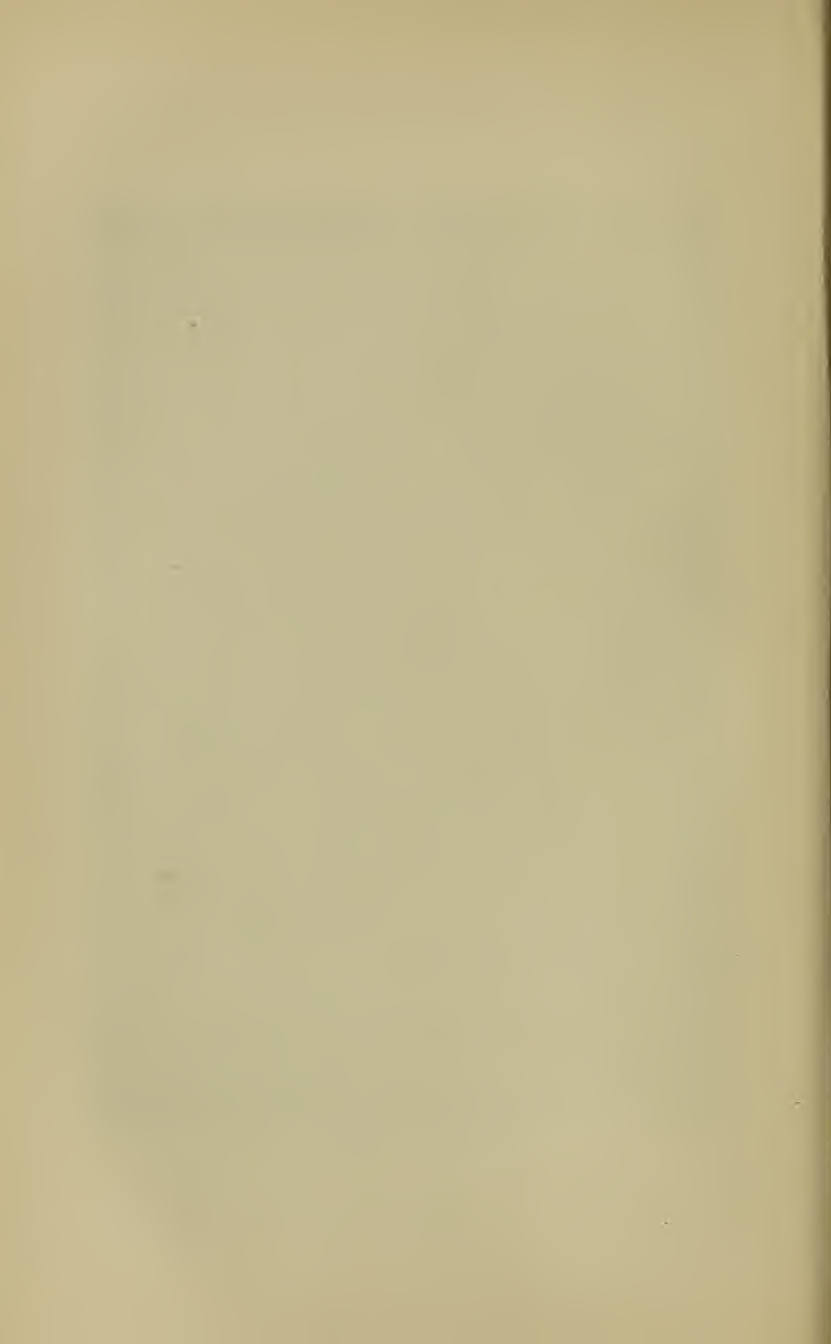
Some distance away, hidden among the trees, the sister of the babe was watching, and as soon as she saw what had happened, she ran up to Pharaoh's daughter and offered to get a nurse for the child. "Do so," said the princess, "and I will pay her well for her services, for I mean to keep the little one." The girl went at once and called her mother. The king's daughter, not knowing she was the mother of the baby, asked her: "Will you live in the palace and take care of the child for me?" Gladly did the mother promise to do so, and in her heart she thanked God that He had heard her prayer and saved the life of her babe. Little did she know what a wonderful future God had in store for this child, and what strange things would be brought to pass by him in the years that were to come.

The princess told her father what she had done and begged that he would allow her to keep the little one.

Pharaoh consented; and so the child was brought up in the royal court by the princess. They named him Moses, because that means in the Egyptian language, taken from the water. As he grew up, he was taught all the learning and wisdom of the



FINDING OF MOSES.



Egyptians; but his mother taught him also about the true God, and his own people, the Jews, who were being so cruelly treated by the king.

Forty years passed in this way; and now Moses determined to leave Pharaoh's court and visit his own people in the land of Gessen. He had been there several days, when he went out one morning and saw an Egyptian officer standing over one of the Jews, beating him cruelly. He told him to stop. The Egyptian would not, and Moses killed him and hid the body in the sand.

The next day he saw two of his people quarrelling, and going up to them, tried to make peace; "You are brothers; why do you hurt one another?" But the one who had struck the first blow, answered him: "What have you to do with us? Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?"

Hearing this, Moses was afraid, for he perceived that what he had done was now known.

Before long, too, it came to Pharaoh's ears, and the king, in great anger, gave orders that he was to be taken and put to death.

Moses heard this, and he at once left the country and traveled far away, till he came to a desert called Madian, where he remained for forty years. During this time he married the daughter of Jethro, a great man of that place, and two sons were born to him, who grew up to be good young men and a comfort and joy to their father in his exile. Often, during these years, did Moses think of his people in Egypt, and pray that God would send them deliverance from their hardships and sufferings.

One day, whilst he was tending the flocks of Jethro and seeking pasture for them in the wilder-

ness, he came to a mountain called Horeb, and there he beheld a strange sight. Some distance off, a bright red light was glowing against the sky. He drew near and saw a great bush all in a blaze; and, though it kept on burning, it was not destroyed or consumed.

Moses, much astonished, was about to go up to it, when he heard a voice which seemed to come from the bush: "Come no nearer; and take off your shoes, for the ground you are standing on is holy. I am Almighty God." Moses hid his face in fear; he dared not look, thinking that if he saw God he would die. Then the voice spoke: "I have seen the sufferings of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cries and prayers; and now I am going to deliver them. I have chosen you, and I will send you to Pharaoh, that you may bring my people out of Egypt into the country from which they came four hundred years ago; and there I shall make of them a great nation."

"Go first to the chiefs and leaders of the Jews, and say to them: 'The time is come for your deliverance; the Lord is about to bring you out of Egypt.' Then you will go to Pharaoh, and say to him: 'The God of the Hebrews has called us; let us go into the desert to offer sacrifice to Him.'

"I know that Pharaoh will not let you go at first; but I will do wonders so great and so terrible, that he will feel forced to let you go. And now I shall show you that all I have said is true. Cast your staff on the ground." Moses was holding in his hand a shepherd's staff, or rod. He threw it on the ground, and at once it turned into a snake. In great fright, he was about to run away, when the

voice said: "Take it up by the tail." He did so, and it became a stick again. Again the voice spoke: "Put your hand in your bosom." Moses did as he was told, and when he took his hand out, he looked, and it was all covered with the white sores of a leper. "Put it in again." He obeyed and the sores disappeared; his hand became sound as it was at first. "Now you will believe me. Go, therefore, and I will be with you, and will tell you what to say and do."

"O Lord," said Moses, "I am not eloquent, and know not how to speak; will you not send some one else?" "No," was the answer, "for I have chosen you; but I will let your brother Aaron go with you to your people and to Pharaoh; he shall speak and you shall tell him what to say. Take your rod, for with it you will do wonderful things before the king and all his court. And now go back into Egypt, for the king who sought your life is dead."

Moses returned home, and bidding good-bye to Jethro, set out for Egypt, taking his wife and children with him. On the way, his brother Aaron, whom he had not seen for many years, came to meet him, and Moses told him everything that the Lord had said. They continued on their journey together, and before long they came to the land of Gessen.

They found that Pharaoh had died, after a long reign of nearly seventy years, and his son had become king in his place. He, too, was cruel and hard, and he ill-treated the Jews even more than his father had.

The two brothers went first to their own people, telling them all that God had said in the desert, how the hour of their deliverance was now come, and

how they were to leave Egypt and go back to their own country.

Then Moses and Aaron went up to the court of the king in the great city of Tanis, with the message: "The God of the Jews has said: 'Let my people go, that they may offer sacrifice to Me in the desert.'" Pharao answered: "Who is your God, that I should obey Him and let the Hebrews go?"

And he added: "Because you have tried to take the people away from their work, I will make their burden all the harder." Saying this, he dismissed Moses and Aaron, and commanded his officers to oppress the Jews all the more.

And now they had a terrible time. The officers became more and more cruel; they beat the poor slaves and compelled them to work without rest or stop; many sank under the weight of their sufferings and died.

Then there was much murmuring against Moses: "See how you have made our burden harder than before. Is this the deliverance God will give us?"

Moses himself began to fear, and he prayed to the Lord: "Why have You sent me to this people, and why do You suffer them to be afflicted so greatly? Since I spoke to Pharao it has been worse than ever." And the answer came: "Say to the children of Israel: 'Have patience, for I shall bring you out of the prison and shall take you for my own people, and I shall bring you into the land that I promised your fathers.'" But the Jews did not believe, and would not be comforted.

Moses and Aaron stood again before the king, and Pharao taunted them: "Show me some sign, that I may know God has sent you." Aaron took

the rod of Moses and cast it on the ground; at once it changed into a live snake. Pharaoh only laughed: "My magicians can do that." He called two of them and, sure enough, their rods also were turned into crawling, hissing snakes, but the rod of Moses at once devoured them. Still Pharaoh would not listen to them, and sent them away.

And now things still more terrible and strange took place.

The first wonder God brought about was to turn into blood all the rivers and streams and ponds in Egypt; the people could find no water to drink, and had to dig wells lest they die of thirst. Then he sent a great army of frogs into the land. They entered into the houses and bedrooms and kitchens, and even jumped on the tables, and no place was free from them.

Then came millions of gnats, swarming everywhere; men and beasts were covered with them, and the bite of these little insects nearly drove them mad. Next was a plague of flies; in the water, in the food, in the air; no place was free from them; one could not eat or drink or even breathe, without swallowing flies.

Shortly after this the cattle and sheep belonging to the Egyptians took sick and died; many people were made poor because they lost all they had.

Next, Moses took from the hearth some ashes which he sprinkled in the air. At once all the men and animals in the land of Egypt were covered with sores; no one escaped, not even the magicians.

Then there was a fearful storm of thunder and lightning and hail. The lightning seemed to run

along the ground; everything that was struck by it was destroyed.

An immense army of locusts next filled the whole land of Egypt. They came like an enormous cloud, so thick that the sun was hidden. They settled on the trees and bushes and grass; they entered into the cities, climbed upon the walls, came in at the windows and doors; they filled the streets, the houses, the rooms; no place escaped them. They ate up everything in their way. They destroyed the grass and the wheat and the trees, and in all the land of Egypt there was not left anything that was green on the trees or on the ground. It was just as if a terrible army had passed by and left the whole country bare and desolate. And now it began to grow dark in the very middle of the day. The darkness grew more and more dense, till at last the day became blacker than the darkest midnight. The sun was hidden, and the moon and stars gave no light. No one could see; everyone was afraid to move; many fainted through fear, not knowing what was to come. And for three days this fearful silence and darkness lasted, as though the world was about to come to an end.

Strange to say, none of these terrible things happened in the country where the Jews were living; and while the rest of Egypt was buried in darkness or torn by the storm of hail, the sun was shining brightly in Gessen.

The Egyptians were now so frightened that they begged the king to let the Hebrews go. Pharaoh had promised again and again that he would, but as soon as each plague was over, he broke his promise.

And now God was about to send the most terrible of all the plagues upon the land of Egypt.

Moses went back to his people and warned them that on the fourteenth day of that same month each family should kill a lamb, and when evening was come, should sprinkle the front door of their house with the blood of the lamb. Then they were to be ready that very night to leave the country and set out on their journey to Palestine.

They did as they were told. Then in the middle of the night a fearful cry arose in all the land of Egypt; the people ran out of their houses, weeping and crying and wringing their hands; they were wild with fear, and knew not what to do or whither to run. In the palace of the king was the same alarm, and Pharaoh himself was seen crying and moaning by the bedside of his son. During the night an Angel of the Lord had entered every house in Egypt and killed the eldest child, from the king's son to the child of the poorest laborer; no one escaped; even the young of the very beasts were killed. But of the Jews not one was hurt. The Angel, seeing the blood sprinkled on the door, passed on his way.

Terrible were the confusion and fear of that night, for death was in every home; there was heard nothing but mourning, weeping and crying.

Pharaoh at once sent word to Moses to leave the country with all his people, begging him to hurry lest, if they stay any longer, all the Egyptians would be killed.

And so it happened that the Hebrews at last were about to leave the land of Egypt. Four hundred and thirty years before they had come there with

Jacob their father, being then only sixty-six in number; now they were an enormous army of over a million souls.

That very night they began their journey, taking as many provisions as they could gather in their haste. Moses, remembering a promise made many years before, took the bones of Joseph to carry them back to their native land.

On and on they journeyed for several days, and reached the shores of the Red Sea, where they pitched their tents and rested. In the meantime Pharaoh was sorry he had let the Hebrews go. So he gathered a great army, and setting out in pursuit, overtook them before many days. To their great terror, the Jews saw that they were caught in a trap: on one side of them was the sea, on the other the army of Pharaoh, with no way of escape before them. They cried out to Moses: "Why did you bring us here to be killed? Far better would it have been had you let us remain the slaves of the Egyptians." But Moses reassured them: "Be not afraid, for you shall soon behold what a wonderful thing the Lord is about to do. The Egyptians, whom you see now, you shall never see again."

At once the cloud that guided the Hebrews, moved and went between the two armies. It enveloped the Egyptians in impenetrable darkness, but on the side of the Jews it was as bright as the noon day sun, although night had now fallen. Holding the rod, Moses stretched out his hand towards the Sea. A strong burning wind sprang up and divided the water. The waves stood on either side, piled up like great high walls; between them was a path of dry land, and by this path the Hebrew army



PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

passed over to the borders of the desert that led to Palestine.

All that night they journeyed, and when morning was near and they were safely across, the Egyptians, hearing and seeing nothing felt sure that the Jews had escaped in the darkness. They hastened forward, and to their great astonishment, saw the pathway through the water, and the Hebrews far on the other shore. At once they set out to follow them, and the whole army of Pharaoh went down between the walls of water. Hardly had they reached half way, when their horses and chariots were overthrown and the men fell on every side. At the same moment, Moses raised his hand over the Sea and the two great walls of water came together with a rush and a terrible roar, the dry land disappeared, and every man and beast of the Egyptian army was drowned in the waves; not so much as one was saved to return home and tell the tale.

Seeing this wonderful miracle, Moses and his people fell down on their knees, giving praise and thanks to God who had saved them from their enemy, and they swore to love Him and to serve Him faithfully forever.

And thus God kept the promise He had often made in the years gone by, that He would bring His people out of Egypt, to the country of Palestine, to the land where Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had lived.

MOSES IN THE DESERT.

Listen, children, and I will tell you the story of Moses and the Jews when they wandered for forty years in the great wilderness that led to the Promised Land. Many strange things befell them on their journey before they settled down in peace in the fertile hills and plains of Palestine.

After the destruction of Pharaoh's army, the Hebrews set out on their march, and for three days passed through a wild and barren country where they could find no water. Soon their supply gave out and they became alarmed, fearing they would die of thirst on the way.

To their great joy they came to a place where there were a number of springs; but as soon as they tasted the water they cried out in disappointment, for the water was bitter and nobody could drink it. Moses bade them not be discouraged, and taking the branch of a tree, he cast it in the water, which at once became sweet and pleasant to drink. Shortly after this they came upon a beautiful spot in the desert, called Elim, where there were twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees. Here they encamped and remained several days, resting and preparing for the long and hard journey before them.

It was now a month since they had left the land of Egypt, and again they set out on their march, and entered the desert once more.

Soon their food gave out, and they could find none in the barren country around them.

The Jews began to murmur against Moses; "Would to God we had stayed in Egypt where we had food enough to eat. Why did you bring us into the desert to die with hunger?"

The Lord heard their murmurs and said to Moses: "This evening I will give them meat, and in the morning they shall have bread."

Truly that evening an immense cloud of quails flew over the camp of the Jews, and the people caught and killed as many as they wanted.

Also, when they awoke the next morning, they saw that the ground was covered with something that looked like frost or snow. Moses told them; "This is the bread the Lord promised to give you." They gathered some and found it delightful, tasting like bread and honey. This was the manna with which the Lord fed the Jews in all the forty years of their sojourn in the desert. Every morning it was found thick upon the ground; but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there was none; therefore, on the day before they were told to gather a double quantity, enough to last the two days, and those that did not do so, had to go hungry.

Continuing their journey, the water failed them again and the people were thirsty. And they cried out against Moses: "Give us water to drink. Do you wish to see us die of thirst in this terrible desert?" Moses knew what to do, for the Lord had told him. Taking his rod, he struck the side of a great rock; at once a stream of water poured out, and all the people drank as much as they would, and filled their casks for future use.

The time had now come when they were obliged to fight their first battle. There lived in the moun-

tains of that region a tribe of people who were very fierce and warlike. Moses picked out his best soldiers and put at their head a brave man named Josue.

Then he went up into a high mountain to watch the battle and to pray for his people. The two armies met and the fight was fierce and bloody.

As long as Moses held up his hands in prayer, the Jews were victorious; when his arms were tired and he lowered them, the enemy gained. So all that day he sat upon the mountain and two men held up his hands. Far down in the valley beneath, the battle went on, and when evening was come the enemy had been defeated and put to flight and many had been slain.

Not long after, they came to the foot of a great mountain called Sinai. This mountain was near the very place where Moses had seen the burning bush, and there in the valley they rested from their travels and remained for many months. The country to which they had now come was grand and beautiful; high rugged mountains surrounded them on every side; in the valleys flowed several streams, and the rich grass formed pasture for their cattle. This place was to witness a wonderful event.

God had chosen the Jews to be His own people, and now He was about to appear to them and to give them his laws and commandments. The day was near at hand. Moses warned the Jews: "Take care that none of you go up into the mountain, or even touch the foot of it, until you shall hear the sound of a trumpet, lest you die; because the Lord is about to come upon the mountain."

So for three days the Jews prepared themselves by prayer to see the coming of the Lord.

When the third day had dawned, thunder began to be heard, at first faint and distant, then louder and louder; the lightning flashed and all the top of the mount seemed on fire; the people were afraid, so terrible was the noise and the blinding light. A great cloud descended upon the summit and all Sinai was in smoke, because the Lord was coming down upon it in fire. The smoke arose black and thick as from an immense furnace, and all the mount was terrible.

Then was heard the clear call of a trumpet and the sound grew louder and louder. Moses brought the people near the foot of the mountain, and there they stood in fear and trembling.

And the Lord came down upon Sinai, upon the very top of the mount. He called Moses up into the mountain and spoke to him the words of the Ten Commandments. From below the people could hear a terrible voice and see the flames and the smoke on the mountain, so that, half dead with fear and terror, they cried out to Moses: "Speak to us yourself, and we will listen; but let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die." Moses came down to comfort them and told them not to fear, for the Lord would do them no harm.

For six days the glory of God dwelt upon Sinai, covering it with a cloud, and the sight of His glory was like a blinding, burning fire upon the top of the mount.

Moses, entering into the cloud, went up to the very top of the mountain where the Lord was, and stayed there forty days and nights, neither eating nor drinking all that time. During these days God spoke many things to him and gave him two tables

of stone, on which he had written with His own hand the words of the Ten Commandments.

In the meantime the Jews waited for Moses to come down again from the mount. Day after day passed and he did not appear. Then they grew impatient and spoke one to another: "We can wait for him no longer. Surely, by this time he is dead, or he would have come back to us. What shall we do? Let us make a golden calf; it shall be our god and go with us and show us the way to the Promised Land."

Then they went to Aaron, and by threats they compelled him to do what they wished.

He gathered together all the gold earrings and bracelets of the people, and melting them, made a large golden calf; and they knelt before it and prayed to it as their god, forgetting the Lord, who had done so much for them, and who had appeared to them so short a while before.

But God saw what they were doing, and He said to Moses: "Already my people have forgotten Me. I will destroy every one of them, and I will make you the leader of another nation in their place." Moses besought Him: "Lord, do not destroy them; for then the Egyptians will say that You brought them into this mountain only that You might kill them. Let your anger cease, and forgive their sin." The Lord listened to his prayer and promised that He would not destroy them all.

Moses came down from the mountain, carrying in his hands the two tables of stone. As he drew near to the people, he saw them kneeling around the golden calf, and in his anger he threw the tables out of his hand and broke them at the foot of the mount. Then taking the calf, he burnt it and beat

it into powder, and he mingled the powder in water which he compelled the Jews to drink, to show them how foolish they were to think that a piece of gold could be their god.

So astonished were they to see him, thinking that he was dead, and so ashamed of themselves, that they could only look idly on, and that day God allowed to be slain twenty-three thousand men of those who had sinned against Him.

Then Moses cut out two other tables of stone, and rising early in the morning went with them up into the mountain once more. He remained there forty days, neither eating nor drinking; and again the Lord wrote on the tables the words of the Ten Commandments. He also gave to Moses orders concerning the many sacrifices and ceremonies the Jews should use in worshiping Him, and He added many laws to govern them when they should become a great nation.

When Moses came down from the mountain his countenance was bright as the shining sun, and from that day ever after he had to wear a veil to hide the brightness of the light that shone from his face.

It was at this time the Ark of the Covenant was made. In it was kept some of the manna with which the Jews were fed in the desert, and the two tables of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments.

One day two of the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abiu by name, offered incense at the altar, and, contrary to God's command, they put in their censers fire that was not blessed. He sent down fire from heaven, that struck them and killed them in an instant. This shows how careful the priest must be

to carry out all the ceremonies of the Lord just as He commands.

Before leaving the mount, Moses counted all the men who were twenty years of age or over, and there were more than six hundred thousand; so that in the whole army of the Hebrews, men, women and children, there were between two and three millions of souls.

Then they made ready to depart. They had been on their journey some three days when again the people began to murmur: "We are tired of seeing and eating only the manna; we want something else to eat."

And Moses cried out to the Lord: "What shall I do with this people who are never satisfied? I am not able to bear the burden of carrying them. I beseech You to let me die."

But the Lord answered: "Be not afraid; tomorrow I will give them flesh to eat in abundance, not for one day, but for a month; and they shall have that till they are sick of it."

To be sure, the next day there came over the camp a cloud of quails, so numerous one could not count them, and enough to last for many days: but in the meantime many of the people were taken sick and died of a plague sent upon them for their ingratitude.

Not long after Aaron and his sister Mary began to complain: They said: "Has the Lord spoken by Moses only? Has He not also spoken to us? Why, then, should he be so much above us?" God heard this and was angry, and He struck Mary with the terrible disease of leprosy. For seven days she



THE RETURN OF THE SPIES.

was kept outside the camp; then Moses prayed for her and she was cured.

And now they were coming near to the land of Chanaan, the land that God had promised to give them.

Moses sent out twelve spies, telling them to go up into the mountains where they would get a good view of the surrounding country, and find out all about the place and the inhabitants. The spies set out and were gone forty days. On their return, they brought with them some of the fruits of the country, amongst them a bunch of grapes so large it took two men to carry it. Most of them told the Jews that it was indeed a rich and fertile country, but the cities were very strong and the inhabitants were giants. In fact, they said all they could to make the Jews afraid to go further, and the people cried out in fear: "Would to God we had died in Egypt; it would be better than to be put to death by these terrible monsters of men. Let us choose another captain and go back to Egypt."

Two of the spies, Josue and Caleb, however, strove to comfort the people: "Let us not be afraid. God is with us. We can defeat these giants and take their land, for the Lord has promised to give it to us." But the rest of the Jews would not listen.

Then God said to Moses: "I am tired of these people, who will never believe Me. I will strike them with a great plague and destroy every one of them, and I will make you the ruler over another and a greater nation than this." But Moses again besought Him: "O God, I pray You do not so, for the Egyptians and the inhabitants of this land will

say that You could not bring them into the country You promised to give them, and, therefore, You killed them in the wilderness. I beseech You to forgive the sins of this people."

The Lord promised to forgive them, but added: "Not one of these people who have seen the wonders I did in Egypt, and have murmured against Me, shall ever enter the Promised Land. For forty years you shall wander in the wilderness, until all these are dead and a new generation has come. Your children shall enter, but not one of you shall enter, save only Josue and Caleb." And God struck all the spies except Josue and Caleb, and they dropped dead in the camp.

Sorrowfully Moses told the people what the Lord had said. Then they murmured and wept and cried out: "No, we will fight the people and take the land now." "Do not try it yet," said Moses, "for the Lord is not with you now, and you will fail." But they would not listen, nor wait for the next command from God, and going up into the mountains, they met the inhabitants of the land, and a great battle took place; the Jews were defeated and routed, and many were killed. However, they never seemed to learn the lesson of obedience, and a great rebellion arose in the camp, about this time, against Moses. Three of the princes, Core, Dathan and Abiron, and with them two hundred and fifty of the principal men, revolted against Moses and refused to obey him.

The next day the three princes, with their families, were in front of their tents. Moses ordered all the rest of the Jews to separate from them and stand some distance away. Then he added: "Now you

will see what God is about to do. If these men die a natural death, then God did not send me; but if the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up, you will know that God is with me." Hardly had he finished when a terrible thing happened. All of a sudden, with a roar and a crash, the earth broke asunder under the feet of the three men; a great chasm appeared, deep and dark; and the three princes, with their families, fell into the chasm and were swallowed up alive; the ground closed again and they were seen no more. The people, in terror, fled in every direction, fearing they, too, would be destroyed. That same day fire came down from heaven and killed the two hundred and fifty men who had taken part in the rebellion of Core, Dathan and Abiron. Instead of taking this as a lesson, the Jews became angry, and the next day another revolt broke out in the camp; they even sought to kill Moses and Aaron. Then the Lord said to Moses:

"Let Me alone that I may destroy this whole people from the face of the earth." At once Moses told Aaron to take a censer; to put fire and incense in it, to go into the very midst of the people; and standing there with the censer, to pray for them. Fearful was the sight that greeted Aaron's eyes; the ground was covered with the dead and dying, stricken with some dread disease. But Aaron placed himself between the living and the dead, praying that God would have mercy on the people, and at once the plague stopped. In that short time, however, over fourteen thousand had died. To show the people that God had chosen Aaron and no other to be His high priest, Moses ordered Aaron and twelve princes of the nation to choose each a rod. He took

the thirteen rods and placed them by the side of the Ark of the Covenant. On the next day, it was found that the rod of Aaron had budded and bloomed and was covered with leaves and flowers. Moses showed the rods to the people in proof that Aaron was chosen. Then the Lord said to Moses: "Carry back the rod of Aaron, and kept it always in the Ark in memory of the rebellion of the people, that they may continue to have in mind that Aaron is My priest."

The Israelites had now come to a place called Cades, and there they dwelt for a long time. In the meanwhile the supply of water gave out, and again the people murmured. The Lord heard them and commanded: "Gather all the people together, and go before the great rock; speak to it and it shall give you water." Moses, therefore, in the presence of all the people, struck the rock with his rod; he waited a moment, then struck it a second time. The water gushed forth in abundance, and the people had all they needed for themselves and their cattle.

But God was displeased with Moses; He had not told him to strike the rock twice. And so He said to him: "Because you have done this, you shall not bring these people into the land I promised to give them. You shall see the land from afar off, but shall never enter it."

Not long after, Aaron died and was buried there in the mountains, and his son, Eleazar was made high priest in his place.

The Jews, weary of the long and tiresome sojourn in the desert, began anew to complain: "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?"



MOSES RAISES THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

There is no bread here, nor water; we are tired of this manna which you have given us."

The Lord was angry, and in punishment of their murmurings, sent numbers of fiery serpents amongst them, and whoever was bitten by the serpents died. Then the people came to Moses, crying out: "We have sinned because we have spoken against the Lord. Pray that He may take away these serpents from us."

Moses prayed for them, and the Lord bade him: "Make a serpent of brass and set it up in the sight of the people. Whoever looks upon it shall be healed of the serpents' bite and shall not die." And so the plague ceased and the people were saved.

The forty years were almost at an end by now, and the Hebrews were coming nearer to the Promised Land.

Many battles were fought with the inhabitants of the country, who tried to keep the Jews away. But God was with His people and they defeated all their enemies, till at last they came near to the borders of the river Jordan. On the other side of the river lay the Promised Land.

The king of Moab—for that was the name of the country where the Hebrews lay encamped—was afraid of the Jews; he had heard the wonderful things God had done for them, and he knew not how to get rid of them. So he sent for a magician, Balaam, to come and curse the Hebrews, thinking this curse might do them some harm. When the messengers came to Balaam, he bade them wait till he had consulted the Lord. That night God appeared to him and forbade him to go, so he refused the king's messengers. Again they came, this time with more

presents, and Balaam consented to go. On the way, suddenly the mule he was riding gave a start and turned off from the road. Balaam beat it unmercifully. Again the mule backed away as if in fright, and at last fell flat on the ground. He beat it more than before, when to his great astonishment the mule spoke: "Why do you beat me so? I have not deserved it, for I have always served you faithfully. Did I ever act this way before?" Then Balaam saw a wonderful sight and he understood why the mule had turned aside. In front of him stood an Angel, a sharp bright sword in his hand. And the Angel said to him: "The mule has saved your life: had he not turned away, I would have killed you because you have come on this journey." Balaam, falling on the ground, besought the Angel not to kill him, and promised to return at once. The Angel bade him go on his way, however, and warned him to say to the king only what he would be told to say.

So Balaam came to the king of Moab: "I have sent for you," said the king, "to curse this people that have come out of Egypt into my country, for I am afraid of them." Then going up into a high mountain from which they could see all the camp of the Jews, the king commanded: "Now curse them, that they may perish." "How can I curse him whom God has not cursed?" the magician answered; "This people shall possess the land. What God has promised them, He will give. God is with them, and they shall be a great nation."

The king, angry with him, sent him back to his home, and not long after, in one of the many battles that were fought, Balaam was killed by the Jews.

The forty years being now passed, and the men who had murmured against God in the desert being all dead, except Josue and Caleb, a second time Moses counted the people, and there were found over six hundred thousand men of twenty years or more.

The time had come, too, when Moses was to die. Once more only, he spoke to the Jews; "I am now old and my days are near their end. Soon you will cross the river and possess the land that God has promised you. See to it that you fear and obey Him always, and He will be with you and will protect you." Then he called Josue, and in the sight of all the people he blessed him, saying. "The Lord has chosen you to be the leader of this nation. You shall go before them and bring them into the land of Chanaan."

Then bidding them good-bye forever, he went alone into a high mountain called Nebo, and there from the summit, he looked across the Jordan into the Promised Land. As far as the eye could reach, he saw a beautiful country dotted with towns and cities, Jericho near the river, Jerusalem afar off.

And the Lord said to him: "This is the land that I promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You have seen it with your eyes, but you shall not set foot upon it." And Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, near the borders of the Promised Land.

Angels took his body and buried it in the valley. No human eyes saw where he was laid, and no man knows, to this day, where is his grave.

JOSUE.

Some three thousand years ago or more, there dwelt in the land of Chanaan, a race of people who were very wicked. In the course of time a strange rumor reached their ears. They heard that a great tribe of people, several millions in number, had come out of Egypt and crossed the desert, that they were marching towards the borders of Chanaan, after fighting many battles and gaining many victories. Terror seized upon the people and they knew not what to do. At last messengers brought word that the strangers were encamped by the shores of the river Jordan, on the borders of the land of Chanaan.

Sure enough, a great camp was seen not far from the river.

The people were the Hebrew, or Jews, whom Moses had led out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and through the desert, where they had wandered for forty years, until they came near to the land of Chanaan, which God had promised to give them.

Moses was dead, but in his place was a good and brave man named Josue, whom God had chosen to be the leader and captain of His people, to bring them into the land they were to possess. Not far from the river Jordan was a great city called Jericho; this city was surrounded on all sides with high, thick walls.

Josue sent two spies, bidding them cross the river and enter Jericho, and there find out all they could about the place and the people. That night, in the dark, the two men crossed the river, and when morn-

ing was come, they entered the gates of the city. They came to the house of a woman named Rahab, telling her they were strangers and asking to be allowed to enter and rest for a while. They had not been long in the house, when a loud knocking was heard and a rough voice cried out, "Open the door; you have spies in here." The woman hurried the two men to the top of the house, hid them under a great pile of flax, then went quickly down to open the door. Several officers of the king came in, crying: "Two men were seen to enter your house. They are spies and are from the Hebrews on the other side of the river." "Yes, they were here," she answered, "but I did not know they were spies."

"Where are they?"

"Why they left here, and I don't know where they have gone. They went out together just before the gates of the city were closed. If you go after them quickly, you might overtake them."

The officers went out, and thinking the men would try to join their people, went down to the river's edge in pursuit. The woman released the spies from their hiding place.

"I knew that you came from the Hebrews," she said; "I have saved your lives, for the officers were here; but they have left and have gone down to the river, thinking you are there."

"Every one in the city is afraid, for we know that you will conquer and possess this place. Promise me that when your people come into the city they will spare my life and all my family."

The spies promised all she asked. "I am going to let you out of the house;" she added. "Do not go down to the river, for you will be caught. Go

up into the mountains and hide there for three days, till the search for you is over ; then you can go back to the river in safety." She let them out of the house, and giving them provisions, sent them on their way.

Before leaving, they warned her : "Do not forget to hang a red cloth from your window, so that when our people come into the city, seeing the red cloth, they will know this is your house and will spare all that are in it." The spies hid in the mountains, and, before long, rejoined their people in safety.

For three days the camp of the Jews rested by the side of the river. On the morning of the third day, Josue commanded the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and go with it before the people. Then they took up their march towards the Jordan, the whole army following the Ark. The priests, without stopping, marched right into the river. As soon as their feet touched the water, the stream that came down from above stood still, as though stopped by some mighty hand, and swelling higher and higher, became a great mountain of water, and that on the lower side ran down into the sea, leaving the dry land in its place. The priests, with the Ark, stood in the middle of the river bed until the whole army of the Jews had passed. When they had all crossed safely over, the Ark was carried across ; then the great mountain of water fell, and the river ran on in its channel as it had done before.

For the first time the Jews now rested in the land of Chanaan, the land that God had promised to give them. They dwelt for some days not far from Jericho, and gathered the corn that grew in the land ; and

the manna, that for forty years had fed them in the desert, now ceased to fall and was never seen again.

One day Josue was walking in a field, not far from the camp, when suddenly he saw a man holding a drawn sword in his hand. He went up to him, saying: "Are you one of our own people, or an enemy?" "I am not your enemy; I am the prince of the army of the Lord, and I am come from heaven to be with you and help you." Saying this, he disappeared and Josue fell on the ground in fear, for he knew that he had seen an Angel; but he was greatly comforted because the Angel had said that, though unseen, he would be with him and would help him in all his battles.

And now he prepared to attack the city of Jericho. But the city was surrounded on all sides by a great wall, the gates were locked and barred, and the Jews could neither scale the walls nor break them down.

Then Josue did a strange thing. He gathered the men of his army, and with the Ark in their midst, they marched around the walls of the city. This they did once a day for six days. On the seventh day they marched around the walls seven times. The priests blew their trumpets loud and clear, all the men shouted together, and at the same instant, with a terrible roar and crash, the walls of the city fell to the ground. The army entered, burnt the houses, and killed every person they found, till they came to the house of Rahab. Josue saw the red cloth hanging from the window, and ordered his soldiers to spare that home and all that were in it.

God had commanded that the Jews should take nothing from the city; all things were to be de-

stroyed, except the gold and silver, and that was to be given to the Lord, and laid up in the treasury. Now, among the Jews there was a man named Achan who found in the ruins of the city a pile of gold and silver; he took it and hid it in his tent. But God saw him do this and was angry, and He told Josue that some one had disobeyed Him. Josue called all the men before him; they drew lots and the lot fell to Achan. Seeing this, the guilty man fell down on his knees and confessed what he had done. In truth, they found in his tent the gold and silver, and brought it to Josue. "My son," he said, "because you have disobeyed the Lord, you must die." Achan was stoned to death before all the Jews, and his dead body was burnt, together with the gold and silver he had stolen.

Then leaving the ruins of the city, Josue and his army marched against another town of Chanaan, called Hai. This city also was captured and destroyed and the inhabitants killed.

One day whilst the Jews were resting in their camp, there came some men who seemed to have traveled from a great distance, for their clothes were stained with dust and mud, and their shoes were old and worn. "We have come from a distance," they said, "and our people wish to make peace with you." "If you live in this country, which the Lord has promised to give us, we cannot make peace with you," answered Josue. "God has commanded us to fight this people and destroy their cities."

"But," they urged, "our country is not here. See how worn and stained are our shoes and clothes; they were new when we set out on our journey, and we have been many days on the road."

So Josue made a treaty of peace with them, promising to spare their lives and their cities. Not long after he learned that these people had deceived him. Instead of being far off, their cities were quite near, only a short journey from where the Jews were encamped.

Josue was angry. At first, he knew not what to do, for he had sworn not to destroy them. "Why did you deceive me?" he asked them. "We had heard that God promised to deliver all this country into your hands and ordered you to destroy the people who dwelt here," they answered; "so we were afraid and we deceived you, hoping our lives would be spared." "I cannot kill you," said Josue, "nor destroy your cities, for I promised that I would not; but from this day you and your people shall be the servants of the Hebrews."

Not long after, five of the kings of Chanaan banded together, and gathering a great army, set out to attack the Jews. Josue and his men met them and a terrible battle took place. All day long the fight continued, and both sides fought bravely and well. Suddenly there fell from heaven great stones on the heads of the enemy. God was fighting for His people.

In terror, they tried to escape; but go whither they would, the stones rained down upon them, and many were killed. Then they gave way and, towards sundown, began to retreat. Josue saw that soon it would be night, and the enemy would escape in the dark. Lifting his hands to heaven, he cried out, "O sun, sink not into the western sky; and thou, O moon, move not."

An amazing miracle took place. The sun, about

to sink beneath the horizon, was stopped, the light faded not, and the day kept on; so that never was there known—before or after—so long a day. The light continued till all the enemy were defeated and many of them slain.

The five kings escaped and hid in a cave. Some of the Jews found them there, and rolling a great stone to the mouth of the cave, came back and told Josue, who brought the kings out and hung them upon five gibbets, and so they died.

Most of the country was conquered, many of the people were killed, and their cities were destroyed.

Some of the inhabitants, however, remained; others escaped and went to live in other countries, and never returned to the land from which they were driven.

Eighteen years were spent in this way, and at last the land rested from wars.

Then Josue divided the land, giving a part to each of the twelve tribes of the Jews.

Some of the cities were set apart as places of refuge for those who had shed human blood. If the slayer could prove he was guiltless of wilful murder, he was received into the place and could dwell there in safety. As long as he remained in the city, he was secure; and after some years had passed, he could go back to his home without further danger.

There were six of these cities of refuge, three on one side of the river Jordan and three on the other.

All this while, the Ark of the Covenant was kept in the town of Silo, where it remained for three hundred years and more.

Thus did God fulfil at last the promise he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for now the Jews pos-



JOSUE COMMANDING THE SUN TO STAND STILL.



sessed the land, and growing in numbers and strength, became a great and powerful nation.

One of the cities of Chanaan was given to Josue as his own; who, now that the wars were over, retired to his city and lived in peace. But when he began to grow old and his last days were near, calling together the leaders of the people, he said to them: "You see that I am now old, and soon must join my fathers whom God has called to Himself. Listen to my last words. You have seen how God has been good to you. He has brought you out of the desert into this rich and fertile country. See to it that you serve Him faithfully and well. As long as you do so, He will be with you and you will dwell here in peace. But if you forget Him, the Lord will punish you with wars and plagues, and will take you away from this excellent land, which is now your own."

At this, the men, all with a loud voice, promised and swore they would fear and serve the true God faithfully and forever. So Josue blessed them and sent them back to their homes.

And having lived a long life, he died at the age of one hundred and ten years, and was buried in the Mount of Ephraim, where his tomb is seen to this day.

After his death the Jews were faithful to the Lord and served Him, and they lived for many years in peace and happiness in the land that God had given them.

GEDEON.

In the early days, when the Judges ruled over Israel, a tribe of fierce and warlike people invaded Palestine. They overran the country, burning, destroying and killing. The Hebrews, in fear and dread, dared not face them, but fled to the caves and dens of the mountains.

Not far off from where all this was taking place, there lived in a little town, called Ephra, a young man by the name of Gedeon.

One day he was threshing wheat in his father's barn when, all of a sudden, an Angel appeared to him and saluted him: "The Lord is with you, O bravest of men, and has chosen you to deliver your people from the Madianites."

"How can that be?" cried Gedeon in surprise, "How can I deliver Israel? Why, my family is the least in all the tribe of Manasses, and I am the last in my father's house."

"Yet it shall be so," the Angel said; "the Lord will be with you, and you will defeat these people and drive them out of the country. I will give you a sign that what I have said is true."

Then Gedeon, by the Angel's command, took the flesh of a kid just cooked, with some loaves of unleaven bread, and set them on a rock under a large oak. The Angel touched the bread with his rod; at once fire came down from heaven and consumed the loaves and the flesh, and at the same instant the Angel disappeared.

That very night the Lord came to Gedeon whilst he was asleep, and said to him: "There is in this town an altar built to the false god Baal. You must destroy it, and, in its place, build an altar to Me on the same rock where the fire came down." The following night Gedeon did as the Lord had commanded; he tore down the altar of Baal and built an altar to the true God.

When morning came, the people of the town were astonished to see their altar destroyed. In their anger they cried out: "Whoever has done this shall die." It was told them that Gedeon had done this thing. They went to his house and demanded that he be given up to be put to death. Whilst they were clamoring and shouting, Joas, the father of Gedeon, came out to them: "Why are you so angry that the altar of Baal has been destroyed? You are Jews and ought to worship the true God, not a false one. Are you the friends and avengers of Baal that you fight for him? Let him fight for himself, and if he is really a god, let him kill the man that destroyed his altar."

When they heard this they were ashamed of themselves, and without another word, went back to their homes.

By this time the Madianites had crossed the river Jordan and were coming nearer and nearer. Gedeon remembered what the Angel had said to him, and he began to prepare for the fight. In a short while he gathered together an army of over thirty thousand men; but the enemy had over one hundred and thirty thousand. Gedeon was afraid and asked of God another sign, saying: "I shall put some fleece on the ground; now, if there be dew on the fleece and the

ground around be dry, then I shall know that you will indeed save Israel by my hand." In very truth, the next day the fleece was wet with dew, but the ground about it was dry.

Again he said: "Be not angry, O God, I pray you, if I ask another sign. This time let the ground be wet with dew and the fleece remain dry." The next morning he found it just as he had said.

Now he knew that God indeed had called him, and would keep His promise, and he was filled with courage and ready to do all things to free his people from their cruel foe.

He gathered his army about him and went in search of the enemy, and soon came in sight of them down in the valley below.

Before the battle the Lord commanded him: "You have too many men with you. If you keep them all, the people of Madian shall not be delivered into your hands; for then Israel would say you were saved by your own strength, and not by Me. Send home all that are cowardly or afraid."

Gedeon did as he was told, and twenty-two thousand of his men left him; there remained only ten thousand.

Again the Lord commanded: "There are still too many. Bring the men to the bank of the stream to drink; those that drink the water, taking it up in the hollow of the hand, put on one side; those that drink with their face right down to the water, put on the other side."

Gedeon did so, and the number of those who drank from their hand was three hundred; these he kept with him, the rest he dismissed.

When night came, the Lord said to Him: "Go

down into the valley alone, into the very camp of the enemy; or if you are afraid to go alone, take your servant with you. Fear not; I will protect you. You will hear what they have to say and will be greatly comforted by what you will hear."

Gedeon waited till the night was well advanced, then he and his servant silently crept down to the camp, where all, save those on watch, were sleeping. Hiding behind a tree, he heard the men talking; one was telling his dream to the other: "In my sleep I dreamed that an immense hearth cake of barley came rolling down into our camp; it came against a tent, struck it and beat it flat to the ground." The other answered: "This is nothing else but the sword of Gedeon, the son of Joas, for the Lord has delivered Madian and all our camp into his hands."

Hearing this, Gedeon was filled with confidence and courage, and at once returned to his people.

The same night, gathering together his little army, he gave to each man a trumpet and a lighted torch hidden inside of a pitcher. With their swords by their sides, and armed in so strange a way, the three hundred men set out to attack an army of one hundred and thirty thousand.

It was now midnight. Silently the men marched on to the tents of the enemy. Suddenly they sounded the trumpets and broke the pitchers with a loud noise, then waved the torches high in the air, crying out: "The sword of the Lord and of Gedeon!"

The soldiers of Madian awakened out of their sleep, hearing the noise and seeing the bright light of the torches, were seized with panic and knew not what to do. Instead of fighting the Jews, they

turned in their mad fright against one another and killed many thousand of their own men. All the camp was in a tumult; and crying out in their fear, the Madianites fled away towards the banks of the Jordan to escape to their own country beyond.

But Gedeon quickly sent word to all the Hebrews near the river, who met and killed many of the enemy. And of all that immense army of over one hundred and thirty thousand men, there were left but fifteen thousand.

Some of the Jews from the tribe of Ephraim were jealous of Gedeon and upbraided him: "Why did you not call us sooner? Did you want to do all the work of delivering Israel, and gain all the glory for yourself?"

"Be not angry with me," Gedeon meekly answered; "I have not done as much as you; for you have captured and slain the two princes of Madian, Oreb and Zeb." And so the men of Ephraim were angry no longer.

Gedeon and his three hundred men, still pursuing the fleeing enemy, crossed over the river and continued the chase.

He came to a certain town of the Hebrews and asked for food, because his men were hungry and faint. The ungrateful Jews refused him. They were afraid to help him, fearing the enemy would hear of it and be revenged later on.

Coming to another town, he asked the same thing, and was again refused. Soon he overtook the army of Madian, who, thinking they were pursued no longer, were resting from their flight. Going around, Gedeon fell on them from the other side. The battle was short and fierce. Again the enemy

fled in terror, pursued by the Jews, and nearly all were slain.

Of that enormous army who came into the land of Israel to burn and destroy, only a handful returned to their own country. And from that day, the Madianites, reduced in numbers and strength, never troubled the Hebrews more.

Gedeon and his men came back in triumph to their homes, and the people everywhere received him with joy and honor. They wished to make him king, but Gedeon refused. "No," he said, "I will not be your king; but the Lord shall rule over you and be your king."

Saying this, he left them and returned to his home, where he lived for many years in peace and quiet.

And all this time the land of Palestine rested from wars, whilst Gedeon was Judge in Israel.

At last his days came to an end; and, having lived a long and good life, he died and was buried in the tomb of his father, in Ephra, the home of his childhood, from which God first had called him to save his country and his people.

SAMSON.

There lived in Palestine in the days of the Judges a pious, couple, Manue and his wife. They were not blessed with children, which was a cause of great sorrow to them, and often the woman prayed that God would give her a son. She was in the field one day, when suddenly an Angel appeared to her in the form of a beautiful young man. "God has

heard your prayer and will send you a son," he said. "But you must drink no wine nor strong liquor. The child, too, shall drink no wine, and no razor shall touch his head, for he shall be consecrated to God and shall save his people from their enemies, the Philistines." Saying this he disappeared.

A few days after, the Angel appeared again to the woman whilst she was in the field. She hastened at once to call her husband; and this time both saw the messenger of God, who told them the same things he had said before. "I beseech you, let me give you something to eat," Manue said to him. "No," the Angel replied, "I will not eat; but you may offer a sacrifice to the Lord."

Manue took a kid from the flock, killed it, placed the body on a pile of stones, and set it on fire. As the flame ascended in the air, to the great astonishment of Manue and his wife, the Angel went up in the flame and was seen no more.

A year later, a son was born to them, and they called his name Samson. The child grew up just like any other child, but as he advanced in years he became stronger and stronger, till at last there was no one like him in all the country.

All this while he drank no wine, and the hair on his head was never cut.

And so many years passed. One day he told his parents: "I saw, some time ago, a beautiful young woman of the Philistines. I love her and wish to make her my wife." They were displeased at this: "Could you not find a wife among your own people," they asked, "without going to the heathens?" But Samson would have no other, so at last they consented.

He set out from home to visit the young woman. On the way, as he was crossing a wild rocky gorge in the hills, a lion sprang out in front of his path about to devour him. He seized the animal in his strong hands and tore him limb from limb, then threw him dead upon the ground. He went on his journey as though nothing wonderful had happened, and after some days returned home, passing the same way. Coming to the ravine where he had killed the lion, he saw a strange sight. There was the body of the dead animal, the mouth still wide open. Between the jaws a swarm of bees had settled and made their hive and gathered their honey. He took some of the honey and ate it; the rest he brought home to his parents, but did not tell them where he had found it.

Some time after, he went back to marry the young woman. During the marriage feast he proposed a riddle to all the company: "If you can guess my riddle, I will give each one of you a coat and shirt; but if you do not, each one must give me a coat and shirt. I will give you seven days in which to guess it." "All right; what is the riddle?" "As I was traveling one day, I came to a certain place, and there I saw food come from the eater, and that which was sweet come from the strong. What does that mean?" For three days one thing and another was guessed, but no one could solve the riddle. Then the friends went secretly to Samson's wife and said to her: "Your husband is making a fool of us. You must find out what this riddle is and tell us; if you do not we will kill you and burn your father's house."

That night she went weeping and crying to her husband and complained that he did not love her.

"What is the matter?" asked Samson. "You will not tell me what this riddle is and I wish to know." "Oh, is that all? I shall tell you what it is, but you must tell no one else. One day I saw the dead body of a lion, and in his jaws the bees had left their honey. The lion was the eater, the honey the food."

The next morning she told her friends the answer. When the seven days were up, Samson asked them: "Well, can you answer my riddle?" "Yes, we can," they said. "What is stronger than a lion, or what is sweeter than honey? It is honey from the mouth of a lion." Samson cried out in anger. "You could not have answered this if some one had not told you, and it is my wife, since she is the only one that knew."

At once he went out and killed thirty Philistines, and taking off their coats and shirts, gave them to the men who had answered the riddle, and so fulfilled his promise. Then he left the woman and returned to his father's house.

Some time after, he was sorry he had left his wife and came back to see her, but her father would not let him in the house. "I thought you did not love her any more," he said, "because you left her; so I gave her in marriage to one of the young men who were at the feast." "Now," answered Samson, "from this day I shall be the enemy of the Philistines and do them all the harm I can; so look out for yourselves." Saying this, he left the town.

As it was now the time of the harvest, Samson thought of a plan to make the Philistines suffer. He caught three hundred foxes and tied them, two by two, by the tails. To each couple he tied a

lighted torch, and he let the animals loose in the fields of the Philistines. The foxes running hither and thither, set fire to the corn and vineyards and the olive trees, and before long everything was destroyed.

This made the Philistines so angry that they killed both the young woman and her father. Then they set out in search of Samson, who had hidden in a cave some distance away.

The Jews, seeing the army of Philistines coming into the country, were afraid, and asked what they wanted.

"We have come after Samson," they replied; "find him and deliver him to us, and we will return home without doing you harm." So the Jews went to the cave where they knew Samson was hiding, and binding him with cords, delivered him captive to his enemies. The Philistines gave a shout of joy on seeing him bound and helpless. But they shouted too soon, for at the same moment Samson with one effort broke the cords asunder, stooped down, and taking the jaw bone of an ass that was lying on the ground, used it as a club, and with it killed one thousand of the Philistines. The rest fled to their homes in terror.

It was a desert place where this happened, and Samson could find no water. In his thirst he cried to the Lord, and another strange thing took place. Water came out of the great tooth of the jaw bone of the ass. Samson drank as much as he would and then quietly returned home.

Sometime after, he happened to go, one evening, to a city of the Philistines, called Gaza. Hearing he was there, the Philistines closed the gates of the city,

hoping to catch him in the morning and kill him. In the middle of the night Samson came out of the house where he was stopping. When he reached the gate, he found it closed and barred. Stooping down he lifted on his shoulder the two doors of the huge gate and carried them beyond the city to the top of a hill some distance away; then he continued on his journey in safety.

Now, there lived in the valley of Sorec, near the home of Samson, a beautiful woman named Delila. Samson loved her, and wished to take her for his wife. The Philistines knew that he often went to see her, but they were afraid of him on account of his great strength. They said one day to the woman: Find out for us the secret of this man's strength, and if there is any way in which it can be taken from him. If you find this out for us, so that we can capture him, we will make you rich." The next time Samson came to see her, she asked him: "Tell me what makes you so strong. Is there anything that can bind you which you cannot break?" Samson suspected why she asked. "Yes; if I shall be bound with seven cords made of sinews not yet dry, but still fresh, I shall be weak like other men."

The next day she sent word to the Philistines, who brought her the cords to bind him, then hid themselves in the house. When it was evening, and Samson was fast asleep, she bound his hands with the seven cords. Then she cried out: "Wake up, Samson; the Philistines are upon you." Awakening from his sleep, he broke the cords as though they were threads, and arose, but saw only Delila, for the men were afraid to come in. Seeing this, she upbraided him: "You are mocking me and have deceived me.



DALILA.

Why are you afraid? I was only jesting with you. But now tell me the truth; what can bind you?" "If I shall be bound with new ropes that were never used before, I shall be weak like other men."

Delila waited till he went to sleep again; then she bound him with new ropes, and crying out: "The Philistines are upon you, Samson," woke him up.

This time also he broke the ropes as though they were the web of a spider. In tears she reproached him: "How long will you deceive me and tell me lies? Why will you not tell me truly how you can be bound?" "If you plait the seven locks of my hair with a lace," said he, "and fasten it to the ground with a nail, I shall be weak."

As soon as he was asleep, she did as he said; and cried out: "The Philistines are upon you." Without even an effort he drew his hair from the floor, where it was fastened, and rose to his feet as strong as ever. Then Delila said to him: "Now I know that you do not love me, for you have deceived me so often and will not tell me the truth." And for days and days she coaxed and begged him to tell her, and she gave him no rest neither day nor night. At last, tired out and hardly thinking what he was doing, he put himself in her power, by telling her the secret. "When I was a child I was consecrated to God, and my mother made a vow that my hair should never be cut. If, therefore, my head be shaven, all my strength will depart from me, and I shall become weak like other men."

Hearing this, she sent now secretly to the Philistines to come, for she had learned the truth at last. So they came and hid in the house.

That night when Samson was fast asleep, she had

his head shaved. Then she woke him, crying again : "The Philistines are upon you, Samson."

He awoke to find that his strength had, indeed, all gone. The Philistines rushed in and seized him, binding him hand and foot. They plucked out his eyes and cast him into a dungeon, to lie there helpless and blind.

Many long weary days he remained in the prison, praying to God to forgive his folly and restore his strength.

In the meantime his hair began to grow again.

One day the princes of the Philistines gave a great feast, to which they invited many people. They were gathered together in the large temple of their false god, who was called Dagon, and they brought Samson out of his prison to show him to the people. As he was being led out he said to the lad who guided his steps : "Let me touch the big pillars that support the whole building ; let me lean upon them and rest a little." Then he prayed : "O Lord, remember me, and restore to me now my former strength." Saying this, he took hold of the two immense pillars, and shaking them with all the great strength, which came back to him that moment, the whole building collapsed and fell, burying under it all that multitude of three thousand souls, and Samson himself was killed with them.

His brethren and kinsmen, hearing of the terrible thing that had happened, took his body away and laid it to rest in the burying place of his father, in the land of his birth. And there, even to this day, after the lapse of three thousand years, is seen the tomb of the strongest man that ever lived, Samson, the Judge of Israel.

SAMUEL.

Before there was a king in Israel, there dwelt in the mount of Ephraim a man of the tribe of Levi, whose name was Elcana. His wife, Anna, a good and virtuous woman, was very sad because God had given her no children. One day she went to the temple at Silo, and kneeling down, prayed long and earnestly, shedding many tears. Heli, the high priest, who was sitting near by, saw her and asked why she was so sad, and why she prayed so earnestly.

"Alas, my lord," she answered, "God has not blessed me in all these years with a single child. I have begged Him to give me a son, and have promised to consecrate the child to Him and to His service."

"Be comforted, my daughter," said he. "May God hear your prayer and give you a son. Now, go to your home in peace."

Anna returned home greatly comforted, and sure enough, not long after, she had a son whom she called Samuel.

Dearly as she loved the little one, she kept her promise to the Lord. After some years she brought the boy to the temple at Silo, and stood again before the high priest.

"I am the same woman whom you saw here some years ago, praying that God would give me a child, and I promised to consecrate him to the service of the Lord in His temple. He heard my prayer, and this is the child. Take him, for he belongs to the Lord." Then leaving the boy, she returned home.

Heli had two sons who were very wicked. When the people came to the temple to pray and offer sacrifice, the young men mocked at them and drove them away. Their father was too lenient. Instead of punishing them severely, he was content merely to scold them, and so things went on for a long time. All this while Samuel ministered in the temple, and he was a good and beautiful child. Every night he slept before the door where the Ark of God was kept.

One night, while he was fast asleep, the Lord called him. Waking up he cried out: "Here I am;" and receiving no answer, ran to Heli, "Here I am; did you not call me?" "I did not call you; go back to sleep."

A second time that night God called him, and Samuel arose again and ran to Heli: "Here I am, for you did call me."

"Go back to sleep, my son," he answered; "I did not call you."

Again the Lord called the child, and a third time he went to Heli. "Here I am, for surely you did call me." Then Heli understood that it was the Lord who had called Samuel, and he directed him: "Go back to sleep, and if any one calls you again, you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant heareth.'" In very truth, again the Lord called, "Samuel, Samuel!" At once he answered: "Speak, Lord, for Your servant heareth."

Then the Lord said to him: "I have a terrible thing to tell you, so terrible that it will make your ears tingle to hear it. I know how wicked the sons of Heli are, and their father will not punish them. Therefore, I will punish him and them; Heli and

his sons shall die in the same day, and that day is near."

In the morning Samuel was afraid to tell Heli what the Lord had said. "My son, you must tell me," he commanded; "do not keep back a single word." Samuel told him all: "It is the Lord's will!" cried Heli. "Let Him do what is good in His sight."

Not long after, it was heard that the Philistines were come into the country attacking the people and destroying the cities. They had gathered together in great numbers, and before long the two armies met. The battle was fierce and bravely fought, but by the evening the Jews were defeated, four thousand of their men having been killed. The rest fled to their camp, crying out, "Why did God let us be defeated by these heathens? Has He forgotten us, or abandoned us? Send for the Ark at Silo, and when it is in our midst we will gain the victory."

They did so, and again the battle raged long and fiercely. A second time the Hebrews were defeated and driven away, leaving twenty thousand of their men dead on the field, and among the slain were the two sons of Heli. Worse than all, the Ark of the Covenant was captured and taken to the camp of the Philistines.

A Hebrew soldier escaping, ran all the way to Silo. Heli was sitting at the door of the temple. He saw the man coming and cried out eagerly: "What of the battle?"

"Our people are defeated, your two sons are slain, and the Ark of God is taken."

At these dreadful words Heli fell speechless from his chair, and when they picked him up he was dead.

In the meantime the Philistines returned in triumph to their city. They placed the Ark in their temple, by the side of their big idol, the statue of Dagon; then locking the doors, they left it there for the night.

The next morning they found the big idol flat on its face upon the ground. They set it up in its place and, closing the doors, went out. The following day again they found it on the ground; the head and hands were cut off and only the stump, or body, was left.

Then there came upon the people a great plague of sickness, such as they had never known before. At the same time, a countless army of mice invaded the country, filling the city, the houses and the fields; they were everywhere. The people in despair, knew not what to do. At last they made up their minds to get rid of the Ark, thinking it was the cause of all the mischief. Some advised: "Let it be carried about from one city to another." They were afraid to destroy it, lest something worse might happen.

The plan was carried out, but wherever the Ark was taken, a terrible plague seized the people.

And so for seven months the Ark was moved from place to place. Whenever the people saw it coming, they cried out in fear: "Take it away lest we die, for the hand of God is heavy on us, and the Ark will bring about our ruin."

At last they consulted together and determined to send the Ark back to the Hebrews. And this is the advice the wise men gave: "Take two cows that have just had calves, yoke them to a wagon, and put the Ark on the wagon. Then lock up the calves in the stable, and whilst they are crying, set the cows loose.

Watch them. If they turn not to the right nor the left, but go straight to the country of the Hebrews, then you may know the Ark has done you all this harm; but if they will not go, then all this evil has happened to you merely by chance, and it was not sent by the God of the Hebrews." This counsel was followed, and as soon as the cows were let loose they went straight to the nearest city of the Jews, carrying with them the Ark of the Covenant. The Philistines followed afar off till they came near the Jewish city, then they turned back; and from that day the plague ceased amongst them.

The Hebrews, seeing the wagon in the distance, alone and without a driver, knew not what to make of it. As it drew nearer, they saw the Ark, and you may imagine with what joy and gladness they received it back amongst them. But that very same day, because some of the people touched the Ark and looked into it, God struck many of them dead. They were afraid then, and sent word to the priests that the Ark had returned, and to come and take it away. So it was carried into another city, but not to Silo; and for many years it was kept in that place in great reverence and fear.

Some time after, Samuel gathered the people together, and addressed them thus: "You see how God has punished you for your sins, by giving you up to the Philistines. But now, if you will be sorry for all the evil you have done, and promise to do better, God will free you from your enemies."

They promised to be faithful to the Lord and to serve Him with all their hearts. Then Samuel prayed for them and God heard his prayer.

The Philistines, in the meantime, learned that the

Jews were gathering together again, so they sent an immense army against them, and there was another battle. That day the Jews gained a great victory. The Philistines were defeated and driven out of the country; nor did they come again for many years into the borders of Israel and the land rested in peace.

And now Samuel began to grow old, therefore, he appointed his two sons to help him as Judge of the people. These men were not good like their father, and the Jews did not care for them.

One day the ancients of Israel came to Samuel, and said to him: "Behold, you are now old and your sons are not like you. Give us a king to rule over us, such as the other nations have."

Samuel was displeased at this. "Do you not know that God is your king? Are you tired of Him that you want another?" Then he prayed, asking God what he should do.

The Lord told him to listen to them and do what they would wish, but first to tell them what rights and powers the king would have over them.

So Samuel answered the men: "This will be the right of the king who shall reign over you. He will take your sons to be his soldiers and his attendants; he will take your daughters to be his servants; your own servants he will take from you, to use himself. He will take of your flocks and herds and of your goods, and you yourselves will be his servants. When that comes to pass, do not cry out against him to the Lord, for the Lord will not hear you, because you wished for a king."

Still the people cried out: "Give us a king as other nations have."

Then Samuel answered: "It shall be as you have said. Let every man go back to the city. The Lord will give you a king."

Then it was that Samuel, guided by the Lord, found Saul and anointed him to be king over Israel. But all this I must tell you in another story, the story of Saul, the first king of the Jews.

Samuel sent word to the people that he had found them a king. He gathered all Israel together and spoke to them: "Now I have done what you desired, and you have your king who is before you. If you will fear the Lord and be faithful to Him, He will be good to you and to your king. But if you will not listen to the voice of God, but will be disobedient to Him, His hand will be heavy upon you; you and your king shall perish together."

Saying this, he dismissed the people and returned to his home. It was some years after this again, that God said to Samuel: "You know that Saul has not been faithful to me and has disobeyed my word. Therefore I have rejected him and have chosen a new king, David the son of Jesse. Go now and tell him I have chosen him. You shall find him tending his father's sheep, and you shall anoint him king of Israel."

Samuel did this time also as the Lord had said, then returned to his home where he abode in peace for the rest of his days. And now his end was come, and being full of years, and having always served God faithfully and well, he died; and all the people mourned for many days over the death of the last and the greatest of the Judges of Israel.

RUTH.

In the days when the Judges ruled in Israel, there lived in the little town of Bethlehem a certain man with his wife, Noemi, and their two sons.

It happened that a great famine came into that part of the country. So this man prepared to leave there, to go to the land of Moab, on the other side of the Dead Sea, where the famine had not found its way.

He set out on his journey, taking his wife and sons, and after many days settled in his new home.

For several years they lived happily there, and during this time the sons each took a wife; the name of one was Orpha, that of the other Ruth. In the meanwhile the father died, and Noemi went to live with her children. Ten years passed in this way; then both the sons died, leaving the mother a childless widow. In her sorrow and distress her mind turned to her native country, and she determined to go back to Bethlehem. So she told her daughters-in-law she was about to leave them and go back to her home. Hearing this they wept, for they loved her devotedly. They wanted to accompany her, but this she refused to permit, saying: "Not so, my daughters. I am old and cannot give you husbands; but you are young and will marry again among your own people, and will be happy in your life. Go home to your mothers, for I cannot bear to take you from your country and your people and bring you into a land to which you are strangers." She kissed them tenderly and bade them good-bye, and Orpha

returned to her home and her people. But Ruth refused to go: "Ask me not to leave you, for I will not; but whithersoever you will go, I will go, and where you will dwell, I will dwell. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. In the same land in which you will die, I also will die, and there I will be buried with you."

Noemi, seeing that Ruth would not leave her, at last consented that they should go together to the land of Israel. Hand in hand, they set out on their long journey; and at the end of many days, they came to the town of Bethlehem in the time of the harvest.

Soon it was learned in the town that Noemi had returned from the land of Moab. When her friends came to greet her, she cried out in her sorrow: "Call me not now Noemi, for that means beautiful, but call me Mara, which means bitter; for the Lord has filled my life with bitterness and sorrow. He has taken my husband and children and left me poor and alone, save only for Ruth who would not leave me."

Now there lived at that time in Bethlehem a rich man, whose name was Booz. This man owned a large farm, and his servants were just then reaping and gathering the corn.

The day after the return to Bethlehem, Noemi said to Ruth: "My daughter, we must get something to eat." So Ruth went that day to a nearby farm, which happened to be the one that belonged to Booz, and picked up here and there a few ears of corn that were dropped by the reapers.

Booz came into the field that afternoon and saw her. He enquired of his men who she was and what

she was doing there. They told him that this was the young woman from Moab, who had left her country to come with her mother-in-law, Noemi. Booz went up to her: "My daughter, you must come every day to my farm and to no other. Gather all the corn you want, and at noon time, take your dinner with my servants."

Ruth was overjoyed: "Why," she exclaimed, "are you so kind to me, a stranger whom you have not even seen before?"

"I have heard all that you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband's death; how you left your parents and your country and came to a strange land and a strange people. May God reward you for the good you have done, and for your love to Noemi."

Afterwards he secretly gave orders to the servants to drop many ears of grain, as though by accident, that Ruth might have all she needed. And so, day after day, she gathered from the field as much corn as she wished, until the harvest was over.

One day Noemi said to her: "My daughter, this man in whose field you have gathered corn, is a relative of my husband; he is a good and a rich man. Now I wish to find a worthy husband for you, that you may be happy and may rest from your work. Do, therefore, what I shall say. Go to him this night and tell him that he is your kinsman, and that you have come to him for protection and care. Be not afraid, for he will do what is right?"

So that evening Ruth went to him and spoke as Noemi had told her. "It is true," Booz replied, "that I am your kinsman, but there is one nearer than I. Tomorrow I shall see him; and if he gives

up his right I shall take you as my wife, for you are a good and loving daughter." Then he sent her home laden with provisions, and the next morning went to the city to look for the man.

He was soon found. "You know," said Booz, "that Noemi has returned from the land of Moab. There is some land she wishes to sell which belonged to her husband, who was a near kinsman of yours. You have the first right to buy, for you are nearer of kin than I. Do you want it?" "Yes," the man answered, "I will buy it." "But I must tell you," said Booz, "that he who buys the land must marry Ruth, that the land may be kept in the possession of the family." "Oh, in that case," replied the other, "I give up my right to it, for I do not care to marry her. You may have the privilege if you wish."

That very day Booz went to Ruth and asked if she would have him for a husband, to which Ruth who loved him for his kindness to her, readily consented.

Therefore, in a few days a great feast was held in the town, and Booz and Ruth were married. Noemi lived with them, and for many years they had a peaceful happy life. Before long a son was born and they named him Obed. He grew up to be a good and virtuous man and had many children and grand children, one of whom was no other than the great king David, of whom I shall tell you many things in another story.

In the meantime Noemi died; and, after many years, surrounded by their children, first Booz, then Ruth, closed their eyes in peace, and were laid to rest in the burial place at Bethlehem.

SAUL.

On a certain summer's day, long ago, a young man, tall and handsome, was seen traveling along the roads of Palestine, accompanied by a servant. His name was Saul, and he was seeking the mules that had strayed from his father's farm. He had been upon his journey several days and had searched far and wide, but no trace of the animals was found.

He was about to give up in despair and return home, when his servant told him: "There is in the city hard by, a prophet whose name is Samuel. Let us go to him; perhaps he can tell where we may find the mules, for he is a man of God, and will know the things that are hidden."

"But," objected Saul, "I have no money or presents to give him, for I brought none with me." "Never mind," answered the servant, "I have some money that you may give him."

So they came to the city, and inquired where Samuel was to be found. They were told he was in the city, and that very day was about to attend a sacrifice offered in honor of some feast.

Now it happened that the day before, God had warned Samuel: "On the morrow I will send to you a man of the tribe of Benjamin; he it is whom I have chosen to be king of the Jews, and he will free my people from their enemies, the Philistines."

The next day, as Samuel was about to go to the sacrifice, he met Saul and at once recognized him to be the man of whom God had spoken.

Saul had never seen Samuel before and did not know him, and he asked: "Can you tell me where the prophet lives?"

"I am the prophet," was the answer. "Come with me now to the sacrifice. Afterwards you shall come to my house, and I will tell you all you wish to know. As for the beasts that were lost, do not be worried about them, for they are found and have been returned to your father. But the very best that Israel can give is for you and your father's house." "How can that be?" cried Saul in astonishment: "my father's family is the last in all the tribe of Benjamin, and I am the least in my father's home. What do you mean?"

But they were now come to the place of sacrifice; and Samuel, taking Saul with him, showed him great honor among all who were present, placing him at table next to himself, and helping him with his own hand.

When the feast was over he brought him to his own house and prepared a bed for him that night.

The next morning, waking early, they set out from the town together. When they were alone, Samuel took a little vial of oil, and with it anointed Saul on the head, saying to him: "Behold the Lord has anointed you to be prince over His people, and has chosen you to be their king and to deliver them from their enemies. This will be a sign that what I have said is true. Shortly after you will have left me, this very day, you will meet two men near the tomb of Rachel, who will tell you that the beasts you were seeking are found. When you have gone a little further and have come to the oak of Thabor, you will meet three men, one carrying three little

kids, another carrying three loaves of bread, and the other a bottle of wine. After that, when you have come to the city of Gabaa, you will meet a company of prophets, and the spirit of the Lord will come upon you, and you also will prophesy as one of them. Return now to your home; shortly I will send for you and proclaim you king before all the people."

Imagine, if you can, Saul's astonishment at these words. He knew not what to make of them. He, a poor unknown young man, to be king of Israel. He could hardly believe it possible. And as he went along, thinking of the strange things he had heard, his wonder grew yet more.

He had not gone far when, just as Samuel had said, he met the two men, who told him the mules were found; then the three men near the tomb of Rachel; and nearer home he saw a company of prophets, or holy men. Joining them, he began to prophesy as one of them, and stayed several days amongst them.

In the meantime Samuel called the people of Israel together in the city of Maspha, and told them: "Now you will see whom the Lord has chosen for your king." He drew lots for all the tribes of Israel, and the lot fell to the tribe of Benjamin. Then he drew lots for all the families of that tribe, and the lot fell to Saul the son of Cis. They called him, but he was not to be found. Sending to his home, they discovered him there, and brought him to Samuel. As soon as the people saw him, they cried out in admiration, for Saul was large and powerful, towering above them a foot higher than the tallest man among them. Samuel presented him to the multitude: "Behold the man whom the Lord

has chosen; you see yourselves there is none like him among all the men." "God save the king!" rang out the cry, and the people crowded around him, shouting and cheering. There were a few among them though, who, disappointed, perhaps, that they were not chosen, refused to acknowledge him their king, and went back sullenly to their homes.

Not long after, the people of Ammon, led by their king, a bitter enemy of the Jews, laid siege to a certain city of Israel. The inhabitants begged him to spare them and their city, promising to serve him faithfully and give him all the money he wished.

"I will spare you on this condition," was the answer; "that every one of you pluck out your right eye and give it to me."

Saul heard of this, gathered his army about him, and set out at once, sending word to the city: "Tomorrow, when the sun shall be high in the heavens, you shall have relief."

The next day, early in the morning, he divided his army into three parts and fell upon the enemy's camp. In a moment everything was in confusion. The people of Ammon were struck with terror and dread; and when the sun was well up in the heavens, those who were not killed were fleeing back to the country from which they had come.

Soon another enemy of the Jews, the Philistines, gathered a great army, with thousands of chariots armed all around with long, sharp knives. The Hebrews were afraid and hid in the dens and caves of the hills and in the thickets of the forests. Saul, with a small band of men, remained in the city of Galgal. Samuel had warned him to wait there seven days, until he came to offer sacrifice to God

for his success against the enemy. Saul waited, but as Samuel had not yet come, the men began to grow impatient and afraid, and many of them slipped away in the night. Still Saul waited the seven days; then he, too, began to fear that the enemy might come upon him and capture the whole party. So he determined to wait no longer, but to offer the sacrifice himself. Hardly had he finished the offering when Samuel came. Saul tried to excuse himself: "I saw that the people were slipping away from me, and you had not yet come; so I offered the sacrifice myself, for I was afraid the Philistines would come upon me before I could get away."

"Alas," said Samuel, "You have done foolishly indeed, and have not obeyed the Lord. Had you waited, as He wished, the kingdom of Israel would have belonged to you and your children forever. But because you have disobeyed Him, it shall be taken from you and given to another." Saying this, Samuel left him and returned to his home.

Now the king had a son whose name was Jonathan, a good and brave young man, whom he dearly loved.

One day, whilst his father's little band was resting not far from the Philistines, Jonathan determined to go down to their camp. Taking his servant, he stole quietly away, and climbing over the rocks and cliffs, presently came in sight of their tents. These men will see us soon," said Jonathan. "If they say to us, 'Wait there till we come up to you,' let us stand where we are. But if they say: 'Come over here to us,' then let us go, for it will be a sign that God has delivered them into our hands."

The two men stood boldly up on the crest of the hill where all the Philistines could see them. Some of them shouted out: "Come over here, we have something to show you." At once they went over to the camp, crawling on their hands and feet; then rising suddenly, they struck right and left with their swords, killing every man in reach. The Philistines, instead of falling on the two men, were struck with a terrible dread; the ground shook as with an earthquake, and the whole camp was in confusion and uproar, no one knowing what was the matter. The watchman in the camp of the Jews saw, in the distance, the whole multitude overthrown and fleeing in every direction.

At once Saul asked: "Who has left our camp?" They told him, "Jonathan and his servant."

The uproar grew louder and louder. Saul ordered his men to charge on the camp and pursue the Philistines. The slaughter was terrible, for the enemy had turned against themselves and were killing their own men, not knowing what they were doing; and many were killed by the Jews.

Whilst Saul was in hot pursuit he commanded his men not to stop, even to eat or drink, adding: "If any man this day shall taste food until the enemy is destroyed, that same man himself shall die; and this I swear."

Now it happened that Jonathan did not hear this; and as he was pursuing the Philistines, coming to a woods he saw some honey on the round. Being faint, for he had eaten nothing that day, he tasted a little of the honey and went on.

When they returned Saul learned that Jonathan had disobeyed him, and, before all the people, declared

that he must die. And he would have put his son to death, but the people cried out: "Not so; Jonathan shall not die; it was through him this great deliverance has been wrought. As the Lord liveth, not one hair of his head shall touch the ground." So they saved his life and prevented Saul from doing as he had said.

Then the king and his army returned home; and the Philistines went back to their cities.

Among the enemies of the Jews there was a race called the Amalecites, who were a very wicked people, and God wished to punish them for their many crimes.

Samuel came one day to Saul with the message: "The Lord is about to punish the Amalecites for their evil ways. Go, therefore, against them and destroy them entirely. Spare nothing; kill men, women and children, oxen and sheep, taking nothing away alive. This is the command of the Lord."

Saul called together his army and set out for the country of Amalec. At a moment the enemy least expected any trouble, he fell upon them, drove them out of their city, pursued them far and wide, and killed their whole army. He captured their king, but did not kill him; and the best of the cattle and the flocks he spared. As he was coming back in triumph, Samuel went to meet him. "What does this mean?" he asked. "I hear the bleating of sheep and the lowing of cattle. Has not the Lord commanded you to spare nothing, but to kill all?" "I have kept these," replied Saul, "to offer in sacrifice to the Lord." "Obedience is better than sacrifice," was the answer; "it would have been better for you to have done as the Lord commanded. Because you

have disobeyed and have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king." And Samuel turned away from him; but as he turned to go, Saul caught him by the skirt of his cloak and it was torn in two. "So shall the Lord tear the kingdom of Israel away from you," said Samuel, "and give it to a better man."

Then he struck the king of Amalec with the sword before all the people, and killed him.

This was the last time Samuel ever went to see king Saul.

Not long after this he went in secret to David, the son of Jesse, and anointed him king in place of Saul.

From this time the king began to be tormented with an evil spirit. Often he became moody and sad. He knew that God had abandoned him and would take the kingdom from him some day, and he was no longer bright and happy.

His servants sought for some one to amuse the king, and drive the gloom and sadness away. They found the youth, David, and brought him to Saul; and whenever the evil spirit was upon the king, David played upon his harp, and the king became better.

It was about this time that David killed the giant, Goliath, as I shall tell you in another story, and from that day Saul became jealous of the young man, and no longer cared for him as before.

Once, being still grievously tormented with the evil spirit, and David having come to play for him upon the harp, without any warning, the king seized his spear and threw it at the youth, thinking to nail him to the wall; but David escaped from the palace and hid some distance away. Saul went in

search of him, taking a body of soldiers. He had just caught up to David, and was about to capture him, when a messenger came in hot haste, crying out that the Philistines were pouring into the country again in great numbers; and so David escaped.

For a fact, the Philistines had gathered together an enormous army and prepared again to make war against Israel. Saul was sore afraid. He consulted the Lord to ask how the battle would result, but no answer came. Samuel was dead, and there was no prophet in the land to give him hope or comfort.

There lived at this time in Endor a certain woman who was a witch. Saul determined to consult her about the coming fight. So he disguised himself, and taking two of his attendants, set out on foot, and came by night to Endor. He asked the witch to call up the spirit of Samuel. "How can I do that?" she replied, "Do you wish to lay a snare for my life? You know that king Saul has expelled all the magicians from the country, and has ordered that if any be found, they shall be put to death." But he reassured her: "Be not afraid to do as I say, for no harm shall come to you." Then the woman, with her magic arts, called up the spirit of Samuel, who had now been dead some time, and strangely enough, Samuel's spirit appeared in the room and spoke: "Why have you disturbed my rest and have brought me here?" "I am in great distress," answered Saul, "for the Philistines are fighting against me again. God is departed from me and will not hear me. I have called you that you might tell me what I must do, and what the future will be."

"Why do you ask me?" said Samuel. "The Lord has departed from you indeed. It shall be as I have

told you before; the Lord will wrest the kingdom from you, and give it to another. Because you disobeyed Him, He will deliver you and your people into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me, for you shall die." Saying this, he disappeared, and Saul, in terror, fell flat on the ground. Then leaving the house, the king returned that night to his home.

The next day the battle raged fiercely, and the Hebrews were driven back, many being killed, while the rest turned and fled. Saul and his sons, surrounded by the bravest of his army, made their last stand on the top of Mount Gelboe. The Philistines attacked the little band on every side. Jonathan and the other sons of Saul were struck down, and at last the king himself was wounded by an arrow. Seeing how badly he was hurt, and pressed on every side by the enemy, he turned to one of his soldiers: "Quick," he said; "take your sword and kill me; for I would rather die by your hands than by the hands of the enemy." The soldier refused to kill the king. Then Saul took his own sword, placed the point against his breast, and falling with all his weight upon it, was pierced to the heart: and thus he died.

Not one of the Hebrews remained; those that were not killed, had fled to whatever shelter they could find. On the morrow the Philistines found the king in the midst of the slain. They cut off his head, and the body they hung upon the walls of the city.

Shortly after a band of Hebrews, in the dead of night, came to the city, stole away the bodies of Saul and his sons, and returning to their home, burnt the

bodies; and the bones they buried in the woods near by.

Such was the sad end of a life begun so well, and so perished Saul, the first king of the Jews.

DAVID.

CHAPTER I.

In the days of king Saul, in the little town of Bethlehem, there lived a man by the name of Jesse. He had several sons, the youngest of whom was called David.

One day Samuel, the great prophet, came to Bethlehem. He sent for Jesse and asked to see his sons. First the eldest came, a tall and handsome young man. Samuel asked the Lord: "Is this the one?" "No," came the the answer; "This is not the one." The next came, but he also was rejected; and so for all the rest except the youngest, who was away tending the sheep. "Send for him," said Samuel; "I will not rest nor sit down until he comes." So they sent for David, a boy beautiful in form and face, fair and innocent. The Lord said to Samuel: "This is the one I have chosen. Anoint him."

In the sight of all his brethren the prophet anointed David with the sacred oil, and from that day God was with him; for this boy was the future king of Israel.

Samuel then left the city and returned to his home, and David went back to his sheep.

Not long after, messengers came to Bethlehem

seeking for one who could play the harp, and it was told them that David, the son of Jesse, was skilful in music. They asked if he would come to the palace of king Saul and play before him.

David consented, and came to live with Saul, who soon loved him and kept him always near. When the evil spirit was upon the king and he became sad and gloomy, David played on the harp and he became better, and the evil spirit departed for a while.

In the meantime the Philistines brought together again a large army to fight the Hebrews; their camp was on the sides and top of a mountain. Beyond the valley, on the opposite mountain, the camp of the Hebrews lay. In the army of the Philistines there was a great giant, whose name was Goliath, of the city of Geth. He was an enormous man, clothed in thick heavy armor; the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam. Every day this man went down into the valley between the two camps and dared any of the Hebrews to come out and fight him, promising that whoever gained the victory would be master of the whole camp. The Jews were afraid of him, and no one would take up the challenge.

Saul promised to give his own daughter in marriage to the man who would fight and slay the giant, but no one in all the army was found brave enough to face Goliath. David heard of this and went to the king, asking to be allowed to fight the giant. "You are only a boy," exclaimed Saul; "You cannot stand against this man, who has been a warrior from his youth."

"One day," said David, "when I was keeping my father's sheep, a lion and a bear came out of the woods and stole a ram from the midst of the flock.

I went after them and took the ram out of their jaws; and when they rose up against me, I caught them both by the throat and strangled them to death. Let me fight this man, for the Lord Who delivered me out of the jaws of the lion and the bear, will deliver me from this giant and give me the victory."

The king consented. Then taking with him only a sling and some small stones, David went out to meet the giant.

Goliath, seeing the boy without sword or armor, cursed him in anger: "Am I a dog, that you come out to me with a sling? Come here, and I will give your body to be eaten by the birds and the beasts." David advanced fearlessly. He loaded the sling with one of the little stones, whirled it around his head, and let it fly straight and true.

The stone struck the giant full in the forehead and felled him to the ground. David ran up, took his sword from him, and struck off his head. Both camps were watching the combat. As soon as Goliath fell, the Philistines fled, and the Hebrews running out of their tents, pursued them; and many of the enemy were slain that day.

David returned to the king, and the women came out to meet him, singing in joy and triumph: "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." Saul heard this and grew angry. "What does this mean?" he cried; "they have given David ten thousands, and to me they have given but a thousand! Soon they will give him my kingdom." He became jealous of David, and from that hour did not love him as before. The next day David was playing the harp before the king, who was silent and gloomy, for the evil spirit was upon him.



DAVID AND GOLIATH.

Saul was holding a spear in his hand when, all of a sudden, he threw the spear full at David, thinking to kill him; the young man sprang aside just in time, and escaped from the room. Shortly after, Saul made him a captain and sent him to the front, where the fighting was going on, hoping he would be killed. He told him: "If you will slay one hundred Philistines, I will give you my daughter in marriage."

David took a company of men, and falling upon the Philistines, killed two hundred of their number and returned to the king. Saul received him again into the palace, and David played before him as in former days. A second time the king attempted to kill him, but David escaped from the palace and went to his house. That night Saul sent guards to watch the house, that he might catch David in the morning and put him to death. But earlier in the night, David's wife let him out of the house by a back window, whence he escaped in the dark and fled to the city where Samuel lived. In the meanwhile she took a wooden figure, clothed it in his garments, and laid it in his bed. When it was morning, the officers entered the house and went up to David's room, where they were met at the door by his wife: "Hush," she said, "make no noise. David is sick and is now asleep. I pray you wake him not." Looking into the darkened room, they saw the figure in the bed and they thought it was really David, so they went back to Saul, leaving one of the officers to guard the house. The king was furious: "What care I if he be sick or not? Bring him here in his bed, ill or well." They returned to the house, and going to the side of the bed, discovered they had been tricked, and that David had escaped.

You can imagine the anger of Saul when he learned that David had fled from the city and was out of his reach. He set out in hot pursuit, but David was not to be found.

I must remind you that Saul had a son named Jonathan. From the first day Jonathan saw David, he loved him as his own brother, and their friendship grew stronger day by day.

After a while David left Samuel's home and went secretly to Jonathan: "What have I done to your father," he asked, "that he should be so angry with me and seek to kill me? I have done him no wrong. I wish you would find out what he is going to do, and if I can come back to him in safety. You know that tomorrow is a feast in the king's palace, and it is the custom for me to be with him then. When he asks for me, tell him I have gone to Bethlehem for a few days. If he says it is well, then I can return in safety; if he is angry, then I shall know he still seeks to put me to death. But how will you let me know what he says, for the king may be watching you, knowing that you are my friend?" Jonathan thought for a while, then answered: "I have found a way to let you know. You must be hid in this field; and I shall come with my servant, to shoot with the bow and arrow. When I have shot three arrows, if I say to the boy, 'The arrows are on this side,' it will mean that you can return; if I say 'The arrows are further over on the other side,' it will mean that the king is still angry, and you must not come back to him."

On the morrow, when the king sat down to dinner, David's place was empty. The first day the king said nothing; but the next day, seeing the place still empty, he asked where David was, and Jonathan

told him he had gone to Bethlehem for a few days. Then the king cried out in anger: "Why did you let him go? Did you not know that he is my enemy and yours, and will take the kingdom away from us? Now go after him and bring him here, for he shall die."

"Why should he die?" asked Jonathan; "what evil has he done?" At this Saul took up his spear to strike his own son, but Jonathan fled from the house. When morning was come, taking his servant, a young lad, he went to the field where David lay hid. Three times did he shoot with his bow; then he said in a loud voice to the boy: "Get me those arrows; they are further over on the other side, beyond you."

When the boy brought the arrows, Jonathan sent him back into the city. Looking carefully around to see that no one was near, he went up to the place where David lay hid, and called him.

The two embraced, and in tears bade each other good-bye; then David went away and Jonathan returned to the city.

After traveling for some time David came at last to the town where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. Being faint and weary, he asked the priest in charge for something to eat. "We have only the holy bread which is placed before the Ark," he was told; "but you may have that." Then he asked for a spear or a sword, for in his haste he had left his weapons behind. The priest gave him the sword of Goliath, because it was the only weapon there. David took it and departed. It happened that just at this time a certain man came into the temple and saw all this. He was a friend of the king, and at

once went to Saul and told him that David had been there, and that the priest had fed him and given him the sword of Goliath. When Saul heard this, he put to death the priest and many others in the city, so angry was he that David had escaped. In the meanwhile David went to the wilderness to live. There he gathered together some two hundred men, and made himself their captain.

One day, learning that the Philistines were attacking a certain city of Israel, he went up with his men, drove the Philistines away, and returned to the wilderness. Saul heard of this and set out to the city seeking for David, and, not finding him, pursued him into the desert. At last he came to a mountain, and on the other side of the mountain David lay hid, unable to go any further. Saul was just about to capture him, when messengers came in great haste to say that the Philistines were pouring into the land. As soon as Saul had gone, David left his hiding place and went into a wilderness full of rocks and caves. Soon Saul came after him again with an army of three thousand men, determined to take him alive or dead. David was lying hid with some of his men in the innermost part of a deep cave. To his astonishment, he saw the king enter the cave alone, not thinking any one was there, and lie down to sleep. David quietly crept up and, without waking him, cut off the hem of his robe, but he would not suffer his men to touch a hair of his head or do him any harm.

When the king awoke and was going out of the cave, David rose up behind him: "O king, behold this day the Lord has put you in my power, and I could have killed you, but I would not. See the



DAVID IN KING SAUL'S TENT.

hem of your robe that I hold in my hand." "You are more just than I," acknowledged Saul; "you have spared my life while I was seeking yours. I know that some day you will be king in my place. Swear, therefore, to me, that when this comes about, you will do no harm to my house." David promised, and Saul left him in peace.

Now there dwelt not far from this place a rich man, who was very miserly and close. Often David and his men had guarded the flocks of this man and kept them from being stolen by robbers. One day David sent two of his followers to him, to ask for provisions for his band. But the man, with many rough words, refused, declaring he would not give his hard-earned goods to a vagabond and adventurer. This angered David, and he sent some of his soldiers to take what they wanted by force, and, if necessary, to kill him.

Whilst they were on their way they met some men carrying great quantities of provisions of every kind; at their head was a woman. She came up to David and addressed him: "I am the wife of the man to whom you sent, and I heard how roughly and meanly he treated you. I beseech you be not angry with him, but accept this present from me, and do no harm to my house." David was appeased, accepted the provisions, and returned to the place whence he came.

Soon after the rich man died, and David, sending for the woman, asked if she would be his wife. She joyfully consented, and gave him all the wealth of her former husband.

Not long after, Saul set out again to capture David, and came to the desert where he was hid. In

the dead of night David entered secretly the camp of the king. He went quietly to his tent and looked in; Saul was sound asleep, with his spear and his cup by his side. David would not lift his hand against the king; but taking his spear and his cup, he left the tent, then called out in a loud voice. The king heard him and awoke, and learning what had happened, returned to his home without molesting David further.

Weary of his many wanderings, David at last determined to take refuge among the Philistines. So he took his band of men and was received by the Philistines of Geth, who gave him a home in their city, and there he dwelt a long time. When the time appointed by God arrived, that David should become king of the Jews, the Philistines went out to fight against Saul and his people, leaving David behind. A great battle was fought; Saul and many of his men were killed. David was resting at home, when a messenger came running, all covered with mud and dust: "I am from the camp of the Hebrews, the people are fled, many have fallen, Saul and Jonathan are killed."

"How do you know that Saul and Jonathan are killed?" asked David. "I was upon the top of Mount Gelboe, and I saw the king leaning upon his spear, by the dead body of his son. He called me to him, thrust the spear into my hand, and said to me: 'I am wounded; stand in front of me and kill me with my spear.' So I killed him, and took the crown from his head, and the bracelet from his arm, and I have brought them to you, my lord."

Instead of rejoicing that his enemy was dead, David wept; and mourning over the death of Jona-

than, he cried out: "I grieve for thee my brother Jonathan, exceeding beautiful and amiable to me above the love of women. As the mother loves her only son, so did I love thee."

Then turning in anger to the messenger, he cried out: "Were you not afraid to kill the Lord's anointed?" And he ordered his men to kill him where he stood.

For many days David mourned over the death of Saul and Jonathan; then leaving that place, he went by the direction of God, to the city of Hebron, in Juda.

The men of Juda received him with joy, and proclaimed him king before all the people.

And so after many hardships and dangers, the words of Samuel were fulfilled, and David became the king of the Jews.

CHAPTER II.

Seven years had now passed. Two of the Twelve Tribes had acknowledged David as king; the rest had followed a son of Saul, whose name was Isboseth.

At last Isboseth was murdered by his own men. Then all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and chose him as their king, and from that day he reigned over all the country of the Jews.

He left Hebron and took up his abode in Jerusalem, and there he built a magnificent palace.

When the Philistines heard that David was king of Israel, they came in great numbers into the country to attack him; but in every battle they were defeated and driven back, and many of their number

left dead on the field. And so day after day the king grew in power and in strength, and his fame spread abroad in the land.

It was at this time he made up his mind to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem to keep it there in greater honor and splendor. Therefore, a few days later a magnificent procession was seen coming towards the city; in the midst was the Ark, surrounded by priests. All of a sudden the procession stopped; the Ark was seen to lean to one side as if about to fall, for the oxen who were drawing the wagon grew restive and kicked. Oza, a prince of Israel, took hold of the Ark to keep it from falling. In an instant he fell dead to the ground, struck by the hand of God.

No one had a right to touch the Ark save only the priests, and God punished Oza in this terrible way, to show how deep a reverence we should have for holy things.

Great consternation and fear fell upon all. David was even afraid to bring the Ark into the city, thinking that God was angry with his people. So for three months it remained in that place. After a while the king, regaining courage, brought the Ark into Jerusalem with great pomp and rejoicing, and placed it in a magnificent tabernacle he had built for it; and there it remained all the years of his life.

One day the king was resting in his house, and was thinking how God had been good to him, to raise him from a shepherd, tending the flocks, to the throne of Israel. And he said to himself: "Behold, I am living in a magnificent palace and the Ark of God dwells only in a tabernacle. I will make a

great temple to be the house and the resting place of the Ark."

While he was thinking these things, God sent a prophet to him with the message: "I know that you wish to build a temple for the Ark; this thought is good. But you have been a man of many battles, and have shed much blood; therefore, you cannot build the temple. But your son, who will come after you, who will be great and glorious, will build the temple for Me, and I will bless it and will fill it with My glory." Many more battles were fought by David during these years against the enemies of the Hebrews. Everywhere he gained the victory. The nation of the Jews became stronger each year, and all the surrounding tribes feared them on account of their great king.

All this time David never forgot the love he had borne to Jonathan. He inquired if there were any of his children still living. It was told that Jonathan had left a son, who was lame and weak. David had search made for him; and when he was found, they brought him to Jerusalem to the king. David received him with joy, showed him every kindness, and made him live in his palace and eat at his table, all the days of his life.

But now I must tell you the sad story of the terrible crime David committed; a crime of which afterwards he bitterly repented, and for which God punished him severely.

There was in the army of the king a certain captain, whose name was Urias, a good and brave man. He was with the soldiers some distance away, fighting the king's battles. One day as David was taking a walk, he saw a most beautiful woman. He asked

who she was, and they told him she was Bethsabee, the wife of Urias.

He sent for her and asked if she would be his wife. She consented; but about that time Urias came home. The king determined to put him out of the way; so he gave him a sealed letter to deliver to the general to place Urias in the front ranks of the soldiers, where the battle was fiercest, and leave him there to be captured by the enemy, or killed. Little suspecting what the letter contained, Urias delivered it to the general in command of the troops; and, as David had planned, in the midst of the battle a few days afterwards, Urias was the first to be slain.

A messenger hastened to David, telling him the news, and shortly after the king sent for Bethsabee, and took her as his wife. But the Lord knew what a wicked thing he had done, and He sent the prophet Nathan to him with this message: "I have something to say to you, O king. There were two men in a certain city; one man was rich and the other poor. The rich man had many sheep and oxen; the poor man had but one little lamb. On a certain day a stranger came to the house of the rich man and was entertained. But the rich man was too miserly to take from his own flock for the dinner, so he took by force the one little lamb of his poor neighbor, and, killing it, he put it on the table for the stranger to eat."

Hearing this, David, in great anger, exclaimed: "As surely as God lives, the man that has done this thing shall die."

Nathan, with hand outstretched to David, cried out: "You are the man. Thus saith the Lord: 'I made you king over all Israel, and I delivered you

from the hand of Saul, and gave you great riches and possessions. And you took from Urias all that he had, his wife; and himself you killed with the sword of his enemies. Because you have done this thing, the sword shall never depart from your house, and the child that is born to you of this woman shall die.' ”

David was struck with sorrow and shame for what he had done, and he prayed for forgiveness: “I have, indeed, sinned against the Lord. Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy, and blot out my iniquity; for I know my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.”

Nathan returned home, and before long, the child that was born took sick and died. But this was not the only punishment David was to endure. He had another son, whose name was Absalom. He was a handsome young man and proud of his long, flowing hair.

He had murdered one of the princes, and was obliged to flee from Jerusalem, and for three years he remained away from the city. After the three years were over, however, he came back and made himself very popular by a simple device. When any one came to the palace to see his father, Absalom went down first, asked his business, and attended to it himself; and so he gained the hearts of many in Israel.

Not long after, he left Jerusalem and went to Hebron. There he gathered a great army about him and broke out in rebellion against his father, wishing to be king in his stead.

The revolt spread far and wide, and many of the Jews flocked to his camp.

David determined to leave Jerusalem, for he was told that Absalom and his army were marching on the city to capture it and kill the king. He had left the city and had gone a short distance, when a certain man named Semei met him, and throwing stones at him, began to curse him, saying: "Now will the Lord repay you because you stole the throne of Saul; now will God take it away from you and give it to Absalom, for you are a man of blood."

Some of David's followers would have killed Semei, but David would not allow it. "I deserve this and more," he said, "for I have sinned against the Lord, and, therefore, I am punished."

So David and those who were faithful to him went on, and at last came in safety to a place of hiding far from the city.

In the meantime Absalom and his army entered Jerusalem and took possession of the city and the palace.

He was about to set out at once in pursuit of his father, but some of his advisers dissuaded him: "Do not go yet, O king. You know that your father is a brave and desperate man, and has many good soldiers with him. Wait till your army is larger; then you will be more than a match for him and his followers." Absalom did as he was advised, and after a while set out with a more powerful army to pursue the king.

Some of David's friends who were still in the city, secretly sent him word.

In the meantime many of the Hebrews who were loyal to the king, came to his camp, and soon his army was nearly as large as that of Absalom.

At last the two forces came together and the battle began; but first, on his side, David gave strict orders to his men to spare the life of Absalom.

It was by the forest of Ephraim that the long, fierce struggle took place. Both sides fought bravely, but Absalom's men were defeated and twenty thousand of their number slain. His men were scattered all over the country, fleeing for their lives. Absalom, seated on a mule, was escaping through the forest. His long hair, that beautiful hair of which he had been so vain, became entangled in one of the lower boughs of an oak, and there he hung, the mule passing from under him. As he struggled to free himself, helpless and panting, one of David's generals came up to him and drove a lance through his heart. He cast the body in a great pit near by and covered it with stones; then coming, told the king that the victory was his and the enemy defeated and scattered. "But how about the boy?" asked David; "is he safe?" When he learned that he was killed, he cried out in sorrow: "Absalom, my son, would to God that I might die for thee, my son." And for days he would not be comforted.

At last he returned to Jerusalem, and on the way back he met the same man who had cursed and stoned him before. Again they wished the king to have him put to death, but David would not.

And so the king returned in sad triumph to his city.

Many battles were fought against the Philistines, who again invaded the country, but in every battle David gained the victory, and at last drove the enemy back to the land from which they came.

Some time after, the king took it into his head to number all the people of his kingdom, to see how many men there were. Nearly ten months were consumed in the work, and they found there were in all the land over a million and a half of men alone.

But God was angry with David for doing this, because it showed he was proud and vain; and He sent a prophet to him with the mesage: "The Lord is angry with you, and will punish you for what you have done. Now you must take your choice of three things; either there shall be seven years of famine in the country, or for three months you shall be forced to flee from your enemies, or for three days there shall be a terrible plague in all the land. Which of the three will you have?"

"It is better for me to fall into the hands of the Lord than into the hands of men. I choose the three days of the plague," was the answer.

At once a terrible pestilence broke out, and raged for three days, when it was found that seventy thousand of the people had perished.

The Angel of the plague came to Jerusalem to strike that city also, and he stood near the barn of a rich man named Ornan. David saw the angel holding a drawn sword in his hand, turned towards the city, and he fell on his face. "O God," he cried out; "it is I who have sinned, and not this people. I beseech you, let your hand be turned against me, and let not my people be destroyed."

Then the Angel commanded that he build an altar on the spot and offer sacrifice to God.

As soon as the king had done this, the Angel disappeared, and the plague ceased in all the land.

And now king David began to grow old, and his last days were approaching. Among his children, there was one whom he loved above the others, Solomon, whose mother was Bethsabee, and he determined to make him king in his stead. So he called the great men of his kingdom and told them his wishes. With great pomp and rejoicing Solomon was anointed and crowned king before all the people.

David now felt that his strength was leaving him and the day of his death was at hand. He called Solomon and charged him: "My son, I am about to die. You know that in my life I wished to build a great temple to the Lord, but He would not permit me. Now I have gathered together gold and silver, and all that is necessary for the building of the temple; you must see to it that it is done. Be faithful to God, and He will be with you always, and will make your reign glorious and great; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you, and your glory and greatness will depart." And so David died at the age of seventy years, after a long and prosperous reign.

He was a great and good king. It is true he sinned terribly, but his repentance was sincere and deep, and God forgave the sin. He was a poet and a prophet; it was he who wrote most of the beautiful psalms the Church uses in her service today; and many and wonderful are the things he foretold of the life and death of the Son of God, and of things that were to happen over a thousand years later.

This, then, is the story of the life and death of the sweet singer of Israel, the man after God's own heart, the great king David.

SOLOMON.

After David, Solomon sat upon the throne of Israel. He was great and powerful, and his reign was glorious even beyond that of his father. Indeed, as long as he remained faithful to God, it has been said that he was the greatest of kings and the wisest of men.

His mother was Bethsabee, the wife of the soldier, Urias, whom David caused to be killed that he might take her in marriage. The first child that was born died in punishment of this sin. A second child was born and grew up to be a handsome, strong man, and this was Solomon.

David loved him dearly, and often promised that Solomon would succeed him on the throne and be king of Israel.

Now, it happened that towards the close of David's life, one of his sons, named Adonias, broke out in rebellion against his father, left the city, and gathered about him a small army who proclaimed him their king. Bethsabee heard of this and went boldly to David, her husband. She told him what was taking place and reminded him of his promise.

At once David gave his orders, and a few days after, amidst the rejoicing of the people, and with great pomp and splendor, Solomon was anointed king of Israel in the place of his father. The people gladly accepted him as their king, and those who had followed Adonias, now left him and made their submission to Solomon.

Not long after, David died and was buried in the city of Jerusalem.

Solomon was but twenty years old when he ascended the throne. He was a handsome young man, tall and straight, beautiful and gracious in look and manner, and all the people loved him.

He never forgot how Semei had treated his father, David, in the revolt of Absalom. If you remember, that was the man who cursed and stoned the king as he was leaving the city of Jerusalem to escape from his son. Solomon called him one day to the court and warned him: "I have promised to spare your life, for my father desired me to do so; but you must stay here in Jerusalem all the rest of your days. As long as you remain here, you are safe; if ever you leave the city for any reason at all, you shall die."

Some three years after, this man lost a number of his slaves, who escaped to the city of Geth. Semei heard they were there. He left the city in secret and went after them; and in a few days returned to Jerusalem.

But Solomon was told what he had done, and sent his guards to arrest him and bring him to the palace.

"Did I not tell you that if ever you left the city you should die? You have pronounced your own sentence of death." Saying this, he gave orders that he should be killed; and thus was the wicked man justly punished for the evil he had done to King David in the day of his sorrow and trouble.

And now, Solomon wished to take a wife from among the great princesses of the earth; so he sent a large retinue of his nobles and courtiers, bearing many rich and precious gifts, to Pharaoh, king of

Egypt, asking his daughter in marriage. Pharaoh had heard of the fame of the young king, and gladly consented. After some days the embassy returned to Jerusalem, and with them the young princess, who was to become the wife of the king of Israel.

The whole city was decorated and great preparations made for the coming marriage. The day arrived. With much splendor and magnificence the wedding took place before all the court, and Solomon led his wife to the great throne, where, seated by his side, she received the homage of all the nobles and courtiers. And the same day he gave her, as a wedding present, a magnificent palace built of gold and silver and precious wood.

After a time, Solomon went in great state to a certain city, where, in former days, the Ark of the Covenant was kept. He remained there several days in prayer, offering many sacrifices to God to thank Him for all His favors, and for bringing him safely to the throne of his father.

One night during his stay in this city, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: "Ask anything of Me that you wish and I will give it to you." Solomon joyfully made answer: "O Lord, You have shown great kindness to my father, David, and now You have made me king in his place, to rule over this great nation.

"How can I judge them wisely; I who am so young? I beseech You to give me wisdom and knowledge that I may know how to govern my people justly and well." This answer pleased the Lord, and He said: "Because you have not asked for riches or glory or a long life, but have asked for what is better than all these things, the gift of wisdom,

therefore, I now bestow on you great wisdom and knowledge, and I will give you also riches and power and glory, so that none of the kings of the whole earth, either before or after, shall be like to you; and you shall be the greatest and wisest of all the kings of the world."

Saying this, the Lord disappeared, and Solomon returned in great thankfulness to Jerusalem.

The fame of the king now spread far and wide, and he grew in power and in greatness and in glory.

One day there came to him two women in great distress and stood before him; one brought a live infant, the other a dead one. The first woman spoke: "O king, this woman and I live in the same house, she with her child and I with mine. In the middle of the night her child died; and whilst I was asleep, she took my little one from my bed and placed her dead babe by my side. When morning came I saw the dead child, and looking more closely, I found that it was not mine."

Then the other woman spoke: "That is not so, O king. I did not place the dead child in her bed; it is her own child. Mine is alive." And so they strove before the king. After a few moments' thought, Solomon called one of the attendants: "Take the living child," he ordered; "cut it in half, and give one half to each of the women." No sooner had he said this, than the second woman cried out: "Do not kill the child, I beseech you. Rather give it to this woman; it is better for her to have it than for the child to be killed." But the other said: "I am satisfied to have the child killed; I do not care."

To this one then the king replied: "The child is not yours, and you have lied to me. The babe that died in the night was your own. If you were the mother of this child before me, you would not be willing that I should kill it."

So he gave the little one to its true mother, and all who were present were in admiration at the wisdom of the king.

Solomon had now been on the throne four years, when he determined to begin the great work that his father, David, had wished to do and was not permitted, the building of the temple to hold the Ark of the Covenant.

Four hundred and eighty years had passed since the children of Israel left the land of Egypt, when the king began the work.

You may know how great that was, when it took thirty thousand men to cut and fit the timber used for the Temple, seventy thousand to carry all the material needed for the building, and eighty thousand to hew out and shape the stones of the enormous edifice; and, besides, there were over three thousand superintendents, or overseers, to direct and watch the workmen.

It took seven years to build the Temple. The place chosen for it was Mount Moriah, a part of the city of Jerusalem, or its outskirts; the very same place where David had seen the Angel with the drawn sword, when the pestilence was raging in all the country. Some believe that this was also the spot where, many hundred years before, Abraham was about to kill his only son, Isaac, in obedience to God's command, when his hand was stayed by an Angel from heaven.



JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.



The Temple was an enormous building. The inner part, called the Holy of Holies, where the Ark was kept, was covered all over, floor and ceiling and walls, with pure gold. In the center of the Holy of Holies were two great Angels made of gold, with outstretched wings; and between these two Angels the Ark was placed.

The king, having finished all the work of the Temple, had the Ark brought there with great ceremony.

The people were assembled in the courtyard before the Temple; and there were sacrificed the enormous number of twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep.

Then Solomon, standing before the great altar, in the sight of the people, with hands lifted up to heaven, prayed to the Lord that He would bless this Temple and all who would enter it, and would hear their prayers and grant their petitions.

When he had finished, fire came down from the sky and consumed the bodies of the animals that were placed on the altar.

So for fourteen days, with great joy, was celebrated the dedication of the Temple; and when the celebration was over, the king dismissed the people to their homes.

Again the Lord appeared to Solomon in his sleep, and said to him: "I am well pleased with all that you have done. I heard the prayer you spoke in the Temple, and I shall dwell in this house which you have built to Me. If you will be faithful to Me, and do all that I shall command all the days of your life, I will establish the throne of your kingdom forever, and there shall not fail a man of your race upon the

throne of Israel. But if you and your children turn away from Me and refuse to keep My commandments, but go and adore false gods, I will take away this people from the land that I have given them, and this Temple shall be destroyed."

After this Solomon built a magnificent palace for himself, and a number of new cities throughout the country; he built, moreover, a great fleet of ships, which he sent to many distant countries. So that in the days of this king all Israel prospered and grew in wealth and power.

Solomon wrote many books; among them were three thousand parables, and one thousand and five poems. Some of the books are in the Holy Bible; one of them is called the Book of Proverbs; another Ecclesiastes, or The Preacher, and another The Canticle of Canticles.

One day whilst the king was resting in his palace, for there were no wars at that time, there came to the city of Jerusalem a grand retinue of nobles and guards and servants, and with them, in a chariot of gold, a beautiful woman bearing a crown on her head and dressed in magnificent robes. This was the Queen of Sheba, who had come from far off Arabia. She had heard of the great wisdom and riches of Solomon and desired to see for herself if what she heard was true.

The king received her in great state, and entertained her royally, showing her all his riches of gold and silver and precious stones, the palaces he had built and his gardens, and last of all the grand Temple.

When she had seen all: "Indeed," she exclaimed, "I did not believe when first I heard such great

things of you, but now I know that even the half had not been told."

Then, desiring to learn if his wisdom was as great as report had said, she asked him many and difficult questions, for she was a wise and learned woman. But to everything she asked, the king had a ready answer; nor was there anything of which he was ignorant.

The Queen made him many presents of gold and silver and precious stones and sweet herbs and spices, and returned to her country full of admiration of the great and wise King Solomon.

So for many years he reigned in peace and prosperity, serving God faithfully and governing his people wisely and well.

But now a change came over the king. He took in marriage many women who were pagans, and who worshiped the false gods of their own countries; and to please them, he built temples for their idols, and himself adored them, forgetting all that God had done for him. In a few years he had taken a thousand wives from all the nations and tribes around him, and he no longer served the true God, as he had done in the days of his youth.

One night the Lord appeared to him with the terrible warning: "Because you have turned away from Me and have followed false gods and have not obeyed My commandments, I will tear your kingdom asunder, and will give it to your servant. Yet, for the sake of David, your father, I will not do this in your day; but after your death I will rend it out of the hand of your son, and will give to him of all Israel only the tribes of Juda and of Benjamin and this city of Jerusalem."

Still the king would not repent, and went on from bad to worse the remaining days of his life.

Then it was that God sent his prophet to a certain man named Jeroboam, who had formerly been a servant of Solomon. The prophet, coming to Jeroboam, took off his own cloak and, tearing it in twelve parts, gave to him ten pieces, saying: "Take these ten pieces, for the Lord has said that He will tear asunder the kingdom of Israel; ten parts He will give to you, and the rest will remain with the son of Solomon."

"He will not, however, do this in the life time of the king; but after his death you shall rule over the ten tribes, for the Lord has so decreed."

These words came to the ears of Solomon, and he sent for Jeroboam, intending to put him to death; but Jeroboam fled into Egypt and remained there in safety till the death of the king.

The last years of Solomon were not peaceful and happy as were the first.

Revolts and wars broke out; the people became discontented, because of heavy burdens and taxes he imposed upon them; and the tribes of the north were about to break out in open rebellion and separate from the kingdom, when Solomon died.

For forty years had he reigned over Israel. Whilst he was faithful to God, his reign was glorious, peaceful and happy. When he turned away from the Lord, his glory and wisdom departed, and his last days were clouded with trouble and sorrow.

He died and was buried in Jerusalem, and Roboam, his son, reigned in his stead.

THE TWO KINGS.

On a certain day, not long after the death of king Solomon, a great concourse of people were seen wending their way to a city of the Jews, called Sichem. Larger and larger grew the crowd, till the city could barely contain the multitude.

They were coming to witness a great event, the crowning of the new king, Roboam, the son of Solomon.

But here and there among the crowd sullen faces were seen and wrathful mutterings were heard. Many of the people were discontented and angry, because Solomon in the last years of his life had been hard upon them, and had made them pay heavy taxes in money and in labor.

The morning of the coronation day had come; the sun shone bright and clear, and the day seemed joyous and full of promise. The ceremony was soon over, and Roboam stood before the people, wearing the royal crown. Hardly had the king returned to his palace, when word was brought to him that some of the leaders of the people were outside the door and wished to speak to him.

"Bring them in," he ordered; "I will hear what they have to say." Immediately there came before him some of the chief men of the Jews, at their head being one whose name was Jeroboam.

"O king," they declared, "we have come in the name of all your people to ask that you lighten the heavy burden your father put upon us. You know how he ground us down with heavy taxes, and took

from us our hard earned substance. If you will be merciful to us, and remove from us these heavy taxes, we will serve you faithfully and well."

The king listened, and for a few moments spoke not a word. Then he said: "Come back to me in three days, and I will give you an answer."

In the meantime the king called together a council of the old men who had been with Solomon, his father, and he asked them: "What answer shall I give the people?"

The old men gave him this counsel: "O king, if you listen to them now and do what they ask, they will be your servants always and be faithful to you."

The king dismissed them and sent for some of his own companions, young men who had been brought up with him in the court, and he asked them: "What answer shall I give to the people?" And the young men made reply: "This is our advice. Say to the people: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's back. He put a heavy yoke on you, but I will put a heavier one. He beat you with whips, but I will do worse; I will beat you with scorpions.'"

This advice pleased the king, for he was blind and foolish.

The third day came, and with it returned the chief men of the Jews, with Jeroboam, to receive their answer.

The king did not receive them into the palace, but went outside to speak to them, in the presence of the great crowd that had gathered together.

"This is my answer to your petition. You say that my father's yoke was heavy upon you, but my yoke will be heavier. He beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions."

Instead of being terrified at these words, as the king expected, the great crowd cried out in anger: "We will not have you for our king. We will find another who will put no yoke upon us, nor beat us, as you would do."

Then there arose a great tumult. Some of the people were for the king, but most were against him.

In a few hours the place was deserted, the men all leaving the city and going back to their homes; and there remained only a few who stayed by the king.

In all parts of Israel the rebellion now broke out. Ten of the twelve tribes revolted from Roboam and chose as their king, Jeroboam, who was once a servant of Solomon.

Only the two tribes of Juda and Benjamin remained faithful to Roboam. And now, therefore, there were two kings in the land; Jeroboam, the king of Israel, and Roboam, the king of Juda.

Whilst all this was happening, Roboam left the city of Sichern and came to Jerusalem. There he gathered about him all who still served him, and after a while he had an army of one hundred and eighty thousand men.

He determined now to march against Jeroboam, to kill him and bring back the people who had revolted.

Just as he was about to set out, there came to him a venerable old man, who said: "God has commanded me to speak to you His word: 'You shall not go up and fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house. Have I not said before that this thing would be? It has come from Me, and so it shall remain; and

there shall be two kings and two kingdoms in the land of Israel.' ”

Afraid to disobey the word of God, Roboam disbanded his army and returned to his palace.

In the meantime Jeroboam was not idle.

You must know that it was the custom of the Jews, several times a year, to go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to the Lord.

Jeroboam was afraid that if his people did this, they would all return to Roboam, whose chief city was Jerusalem. So he planned a very wicked thing.

He had two great calves made of gold. One of them he placed in the city of Dan, away up within the northern boundary of his kingdom; the other in Bethel, in the southern part of Israel, not very far from Jerusalem.

Then he announced to the people that they need no longer go to Jerusalem to adore God and offer Him sacrifices; for these two golden calves were their gods, and all sacrifices must be offered to them.

He stationed guards around who would not allow the people to go to Jerusalem; and in this way he turned them away from God, and led them into idolatry.

He chose priests to serve at the altars of the golden calves, and he appointed feast days when the people should go and adore them. He himself went first to Dan, to worship the golden calf there, and then down to Bethel.

While the king was at Bethel a strange thing happened to him. He was standing by the altar of the golden calf, offering incense, when a venerable old man came before him and cried out: “O king, there shall come, many years after you, another king who

will kill your false priests, and upon this altar he will burn the bones of dead men; and the name of the king will be Josias."

All this really did take place over three hundred years later.

Then the prophet added—for the old man was no less than a prophet of God—"I shall give you a sign, that what I have said will come to pass. This altar will now, before your eyes, be broken asunder, and the ashes upon it be spilled out upon the ground."

Hearing these words, the king became furious and stretched out his hand to seize the prophet. In a moment his hand withered and fell helpless and dead by his side. At the same instant, the altar broke in two, and the ashes were thrown mysteriously upon the ground about.

Then in terror and dismay, the king begged the prophet to pray that God might restore his hand to him. The man of God besought the Lord and the king's hand was restored, and it became well and strong as before.

Jeroboam invited the prophet home to dine with him that day. "No," he answered, "I will not go with you, nor eat nor drink with you, for the Lord has commanded me to return home, and not to eat nor to drink in this wicked place." Saying this, he left the king and went on his way.

Jeroboam had a son whom he dearly loved. This son fell grievously sick and was about to die. The king knew not what to do. At last, in his distress, he said to his wife: "Disguise yourself, so that nobody will know you are the king's wife, and go to the city of Silo. There dwells in that city a great

prophet, the same one who told me, when Solomon was still living, that I would one day be king of the ten tribes of Israel. Go to the prophet, and take some presents with you. He will tell you what will become of our child." When she came to the house and stood at the door, the prophet cried out: "Come in; I know who you are. You are the wife of the king, Jeroboam. Why did you disguise yourself and pretend to be someone else?"

"I have sad news to tell you. Go and say to Jeroboam: 'Because you have been wicked and ungrateful, and have turned the people away from God, therefore, the Lord will bring great evils upon you; and after your death he will take the throne away from your children, and give it to another.'"

Then he added to the woman: "Return now to your home; when you stand upon the threshold of your door, your child shall die."

The mother returned to the palace in heavy sorrow. Truly, hardly had she entered, when terrible sounds came to her ears, sobbing and moaning and wailing. She hastened to the room where lay her son, and the boy was dead.

Jeroboam lived some time after this; and there was war always between him and Roboam, the king of Juda. At last, after many misfortunes, Jeroboam was defeated in a great battle, which he fought against Abiam, the son of Roboam; and not long afterwards he died, having reigned over the ten tribes of Israel for twenty-two years.

I must go back now to Roboam, and tell you what things befell him from the day that Jeroboam and the ten tribes revolted against him.

By the command of God, he disbanded the army

he had gathered together to fight against the king of Israel, and returned to Jerusalem, his capital city.

For three years he served God faithfully and well. The priests and levites from every part of Israel left their homes and came to Jerusalem to live, that they might worship there the true God in peace.

But after a while Roboam turned to evil, and became proud and wicked.

God determined to punish him and sent against him a powerful enemy, Sesac, the king of Egypt.

With an enormous army and twelve hundred chariots of war, the king of Egypt marched against the cities of Juda, captured them, and at last came before the walls of Jerusalem.

Then the king repented of the evil he had done, and prayed to God for pardon and help.

The Lord heard his prayer. All of a sudden, the king of Egypt put aside his fierceness and anger, and made terms of peace with Roboam. He took away from Jerusalem the treasures of gold and silver, made the king pay him a great tribute, or tax in money, and went back to his country, leaving the king and his people in peace.

After that Roboam again forsook the Lord and did many evil things. At last, after reigning for seventeen years, and being now near sixty years old, he died and was buried in Jerusalem.

From that day, and for many long years, the kings of Juda and of Israel fought against each other; and there were wars and bloodshed in all the land of the Jews. Until at last, over two hundred years later, the kingdom of Israel was destroyed, and the ten tribes were taken captive by the Assyrians. They were carried away to a strange land,

never to return to their homes again; and the kingdom of Juda alone was left of what had once been a great and powerful nation.

ELIAS.

There once reigned in the land of Israel a very wicked king, whose name was Ahab. He neither feared God nor served Him. Instead, he adored a false god, or idol, that was called Baal; he chose priests to serve this idol, and turned his people away from the worship of the one true God.

In the days of this wicked king, there lived in a certain town a very good and holy man, Elias. One day God spoke to him:

"Because this people and their king will not adore Me nor serve Me, for three years no rain shall fall in all this country. There shall be a great famine and many shall die of hunger. Leave this place, and hide yourself in a cave that I shall show you, near the river Jordan."

Elias left his home at once, and went to dwell by the river Jordan. Sure enough, day after day no rain fell; the fields and the meadows were all dried up; the grass and corn and the fruit trees died.

Elias dwelt in the cave, and he drank the waters of a nearby spring; twice a day, every morning and evening, a raven brought him bread and meat.

For many days he lived in this cave. At last the spring dried up and he had no water. Then the Lord gave him another command: "Go to the city

called Sarepta, and there you will find a certain widow woman. I have commanded her to feed you and take care of you."

Setting out on his journey, he came to the city of Sarepta. When he drew near the town, he beheld a woman gathering the dry twigs and branches that fell from the trees. He went up to her: "Good woman, I beseech you, give me some water to drink; I am thirsty."

"Yes," she answered, "I have a pitcher of water near here; I will get it for you."

As she was going, he called out: "And please bring me a morsel of bread to eat, for I am hungry."

"Alas," she said, "I have no bread. I am a poor woman. All that I have in the house is a small pot of meal and a little pitcher of oil. I am getting these sticks now to make a fire and bake a cake for myself and my son. After we have eaten, we must lie down and die, for we have nothing more to eat."

"Don't be afraid," replied Elias, "but do as I say. Make me a little cake first; then one for yourself and your son; and I promise you that the pot of meal will never be empty, and the oil will never grow less in the pitcher, no matter how much you may use." She believed him; and making two cakes, she gave one to him, and she and her son ate the other.

A wonderful thing happened. When she went back to the house, the pot of meal was just as full as before, and the oil filled the pitcher up to the brim. She begged Elias to come and live in her house. He did so, and from that day they had as much to eat as they needed.

All this time no rain fell in the land, and nothing grew on the earth.

178 HALF HOUR WITH GOD'S HEROES

One day it happened that the son of this poor woman was taken sick. He grew rapidly worse, and in a few days he was dead. The poor mother was stricken with grief, and going to Elias, begged him with tears to pray to God for her son.

Elias took the body of the young man into an upper room; then he closed the door, and throwing himself on the body, prayed that God would bring back the life that had gone. Hardly had he finished his prayer, when the young man opened his eyes, moved his hands and feet, and at length stood up. Elias took him by the hand and restored him to his mother.

Imagine her joy and wonder as she saw her son alive again and well! It was a happy little family that gathered around the table that evening; and again and again did the good woman thank God and Elias, His servant, for so wonderful a favor.

And so they lived for many days in peace and joy, till the three years were nearly at an end.

One morning Elias rose early, and bidding the woman and her son good-bye, started on his journey to the city of the wicked king Achab. As he was yet on his way, he met a certain captain of the king's troops, and the captain recognized him.

"Alas, my lord!" he cried, "do you not know that the king is searching for you everywhere to put you to death? He thinks that it is you who has caused all this trouble."

"Yes, I know it," he answered; "but now go to Achab and tell him that I am here, and that I wish to see him."

"I am afraid to go," the captain replied; "for as soon as I go the Lord will take you somewhere else,

and the king, not finding you, will put me to death for letting you escape."

"Be not afraid; when you return with the king I shall be here. I wish to see him."

So the captain departed; and before long he returned with the king and a company of soldiers. Then Elias spoke to Achab: "Soon you will see a wonderful thing. Gather together all the priests of your false god, Baal, and come with me to Mount Carmel."

The king did as he ordered. Within a few days a great concourse of people had assembled on the Mount.

"Now," said Elias, "I will show you who is the true God, the God whom I serve, or Baal, whom you worship. Build two altars here, one for your god, and one for my God."

This done, the priests of Baal killed a bullock and placed it on their altar. Elias did the same for his altar. "Now," he exclaimed, "call on your god, and I will call on mine, and the God that shall answer by sending down fire from heaven is the true God."

The priests of Baal surrounded their altar on which the bullock lay, and cried to their god from morning till noon, but no fire came from heaven. Elias mocked them: "Cry out louder; perhaps your god is asleep, or maybe he has gone on a journey, or is talking to someone and does not hear you."

Louder and louder they cried, but no fire came from heaven.

Then Elias, pouring water over the bullock, placed on his altar, saturated it and the stones of the altar till the water ran down the sides. Lifting his hands

on high then, he prayed: "O God, show this people that You are the true God, that they may worship and serve You."

Hardly had he finished his prayer when, quick as lightning, there flashed from heaven a streak of flame, setting fire to the bullock, and consuming it with the wood and the stones and the dust, and licking up the water that had flowed from the altar.

When the people saw this they fell on their faces in fear and wonder, crying out: "This is indeed the Lord, the God of Israel!"

Elias then spoke to Achab: "The three years are now over, and the Lord will send rain upon the earth."

And behold, a little cloud arose out of the sea. Larger and larger it grew, spreading over all the heavens, till at last the sky was overcast with black clouds, which became darker and darker. Then the storm broke; the rain fell in torrents, and the drought was at an end.

The king and his servants returned home, and Elias rested a while untroubled, but not for long.

Achab had a wife, named Jezabel, more wicked even than himself, who hated Elias, and she determined to kill him as soon as she could lay hands on him. Elias heard of this and fled; and traveling far, he came at last to a desert. Weary and sad, he lay down at the foot of a tree, and soon was sound asleep. After some hours, he awoke with a start; he felt someone touch him on the shoulder, and he heard a voice saying: "Arise and eat." Turning, he saw by his side some bread and water. He ate and drank, for he was hungry, and went fast asleep again. It was an Angel sent from heaven. A sec-

ond time he touched the prophet on the shoulder, saying: "Arise and eat, for you have a long way to go."

Rising up, Elias ate again of the bread and drank some water. All at once, he became so strong and vigorous that he walked for forty days and forty nights in the desert, till he came at last to Mount Horeb, and there he dwelt for a while in a cave in the mountain.

After some days, God appeared to him and told him to leave the place and go to Damascus in Syria. Elias obeyed, and on his way to Damascus, while passing a field, he saw a man plowing. He went up to him and threw his cloak over the man's shoulders. Immediately the man left his plow and ran after Elias, crying out: "I will go with you; but first let me bid good-bye to my mother and father, then I will come."

"Do so," said Elias, "for after I am gone you will be a great prophet in Israel."

And so it turned out to be; this man was no other than the prophet Eliseus, of whom, later on, I shall have many strange things to tell you.

In the meantime, there dwelt in one of the cities of the Jews, a certain man whose name was Naboth. This man possessed a vineyard near the palace of the king. Achab sent for him one day: "Sell me your vineyard, for it is near my palace. I will give you a good price for it; or, if you prefer, I will give you another and a better vineyard."

"No, I will not sell it," Naboth answered; "this vineyard belonged to my family for many years, and I do not wish to part with it."

The king was angry at this, and told Jezabel, his wife. "Are you worried about that?" she asked. "I will get the vineyard for you. Leave it to me."

She sent word to the judges and chief men of the city to come to her, and she sent also for Naboth. When they were come she got two men to swear that they had heard Naboth curse against God and the king. This was false, for Naboth was a good and devout man.

The judges believed the witnesses, and Naboth was condemned to die. He was taken out and stoned to death in the most cruel way.

Then the wicked queen went to her husband and told him: "Now you can have the vineyard, since its owner is dead." Achab took it, and made of it a beautiful garden.

But God had seen this wicked deed, and He told Elias to go down to the king with this message:

"Because you have killed Naboth, a just man, and taken his vineyard, in this very place where he was slain, the dogs shall come and lick your blood." And to Jezabel: "And the dogs shall eat your body and lick up your blood in the same field that once belonged to Naboth."

This terrible threat was fulfilled in truth. Some three years later, in a battle with the King of Syria Achab, while standing in his chariot, was shot with an arrow and killed, and the dogs licked the blood that came from the chariot.

Some years after that again, by order of a new king of Israel, Jezabel was cast headlong from a window of her palace, and her body was trodden under foot by horses; and when at evening they came to bury her, a few of the bones only were

found, because the dogs had eaten the rest; and this was in the garden that once was Naboth's vineyard.

After the death of Ahab, the new king who reigned in Israel was Ochozias. This king was taken very sick one day, and he sent messengers to consult the false gods whom he worshiped, as to whether he would recover or not.

On the way, the messengers met Elias, who asked them: "Why do you consult the false god, and not the true God of Israel? Because your king has done this, he shall die."

The messengers returned in haste and told the king what the prophet had said.

The king was angry, and he sent a captain and fifty soldiers to capture Elias. They found him on the top of a hill not far off, and the captain called to him: "Man of God, the king has commanded you to come to him."

"If I am a man of God," said Elias, "let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your men."

Hardly had he spoken, when a flash came from heaven, and in an instant the men fell dead on the ground.

The king waited a while, then sent another captain and fifty men, and they met their deaths in the same way.

Again the king sent another captain and fifty men. When they found Elias, the captain cried out: "I beseech you, O man of God, do not destroy me and my men, as you did the others."

"Fear not," was the answer; "I will come with you." And going to the king, who was lying on his bed of sickness, he said: "Why, O king, did you send to consult a false god, and not the true God?"

Because you have done this you shall never rise from this bed alive, but shall surely die."

His words came true, and before long the king did die.

And now the time drew near when Elias was to leave the world, for his work was done.

One day, he and his companion, Eliseus, were traveling together, and Elias said to Eliseus: "Stay here, while I go further on." Eliseus would not leave him. Then Elias said again: "Stay here, while I go as far as Jericho." Still his companion refused to part from him. Again he said: "Stay here, at least till I go as far as the Jordan." "No." answered Eliseus, "I will go with you, and will not leave you."

So they went on together; and when they came to the river bank, Elias took off his cloak and struck the water with it. At once the water of the river divided in two, and they passed over on the dry ground to the other side.

When they reached the other shore, Elias stopped and said to his companion: "We will go no further. The Lord is about to take me away. Ask of me anything you wish before I depart, for you will see me no more."

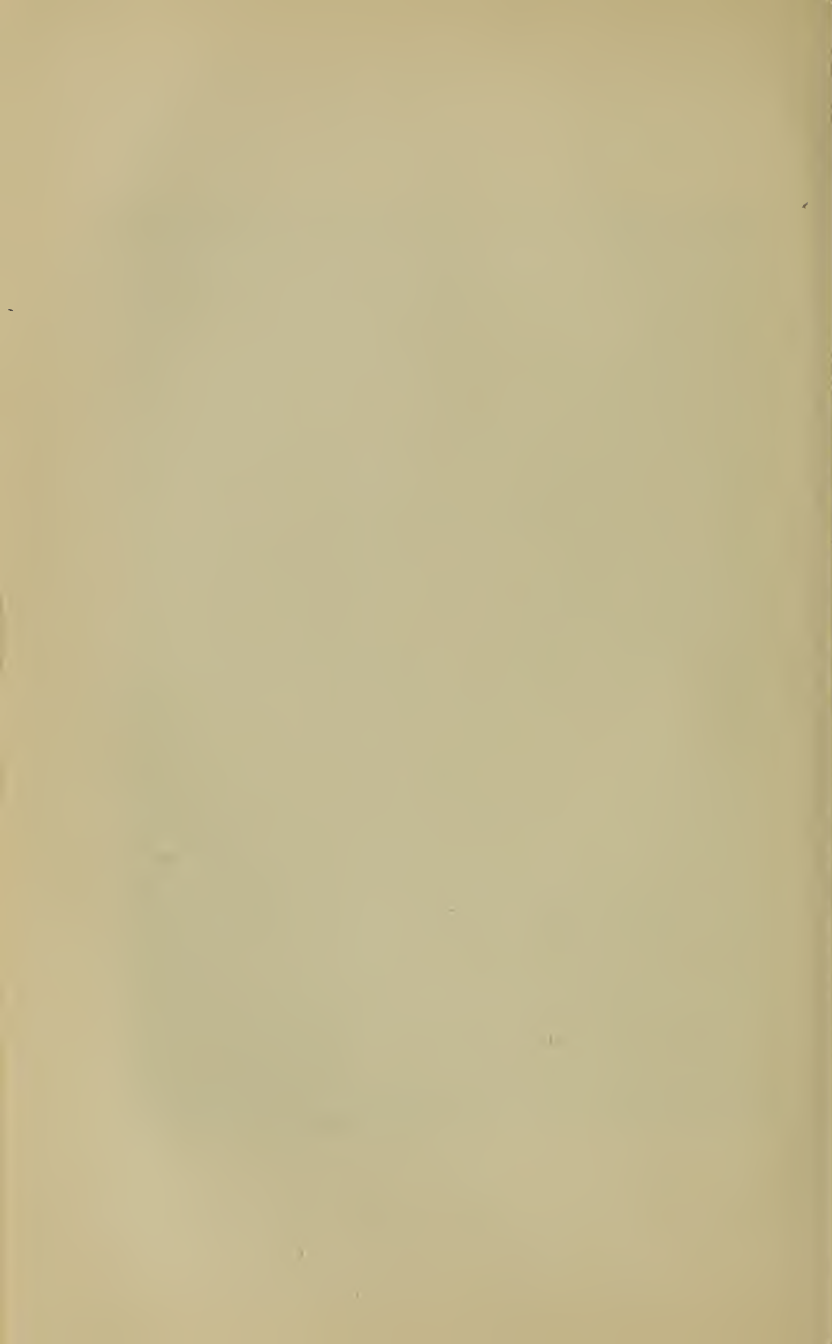
"There is one thing I desire," answered Eliseus; "let me become a great prophet like you."

"This is a hard thing you have asked; yet it will be granted on one condition, and that is, if you see me when I am taken away; but if you do not see me, your prayer will not be granted."

They went on their way conversing together; when, suddenly, there came down from heaven, right to the very feet of the two men, a chariot all of fire



THE FIERY CHARIOT.



and drawn by horses of fire. A terrible whirlwind came up, and in the midst of it Elias was taken into the chariot by unseen hands, and it went straight up into the sky.

But as it was going, Eliseus cried out : "My father, my father, the chariot is taking you away !" Hardly had he spoken when the cloak of Elias fell from the shoulders of the prophet ; Eliseus caught it upon his own shoulders, and the chariot disappeared.

And so Elias was taken up alive into heaven, and walked upon the earth no more. But because all men must die some time, he will come on earth again. Many think he will come just before the end of the world, and will be put to death by some wicked prince or king. Then the earth will be destroyed and all men will come before the judgment seat of God, and eternity will begin.

Such is the wonderful story of the great prophet, the greatest after Moses, who performed deeds so mighty and strange, that we could hardly believe them did not the Holy Books tell us these things were true.

ELISEUS.

I must tell you now the story of Eliseus from the day that Elias was parted from him and was carried into heaven in a chariot of fire.

Slowly and sadly he traced his steps back to the river Jordan, thinking of his beloved master whom he would see no more.

When he came to the river, he took the cloak

from his shoulders and with it struck the water as Elias had done that very same day; but the water remained still, and he cried out: "Where is the God of Elias? Why will He not do for me what He did for him?"

Again he struck the water with the cloak, and this time the river divided in two and left a dry passage by which the prophet passed to the other shore.

There he met a company of men who had seen him with Elias before, and they asked him: "Where is your master?" "The Lord has taken him away," he replied.

"Do you wish us to go and seek for him?" "No," the prophet said, "it is useless; you will not find him."

In spite of this, for three days they sought far and near for Elias, but could not find him; and returning to Eliseus, they told him of their failure.

"But I told you not to go, for you would not find him," replied Eliseus.

"Master," said the men, "the spring from which we get the water is not good, and the ground is barren; we beseech you to heal them."

Eliseus took some salt and cast it into the spring; and from that day the water was sweet and good to drink, and the ground became rich and fertile.

The prophet then left there, and came near to the town of Bethel. This was a wicked place; in the town was one of the golden calves that Jeroboam had made for the people to worship.

He had just come in sight of the city gate, when a crowd of boys, seeing the prophet, began to mock him and cry out: "Go up, old bald head, go up!"



THE CHILDREN DEVoured BY BEARS.



Whilst they were shouting and crowding around him, one of them gave a cry; looking around, they all saw two great bears coming out of the woods, straight towards them. It was too late to flee. In a few minutes the bears had killed many of the boys, forty-two in all, and the rest escaped to the city.

The prophet would not stay in that wicked place, but went up into Samaria and dwelt there for a while in peace.

One day Joram, the king of Israel, and Josaphat, the king of Juda, who were friends, gathered an army and came to fight against the king of Moab.

Now, whilst the army of the Jewish kings was still in the desert, the supply of water gave out, and the men began to suffer from thirst.

The king of Juda told his friend of Eliseus. They both went to see the prophet; and when they approached him, Eliseus said: "Tell your men to dig a number of ditches in the bed of the dried-up torrent near your camp. There will be no rain nor wind, and yet these ditches will be filled with water, and your men will have all they wish to drink."

It was done as he said; and early the next morning the channel was full of water, but how it came there no one knew.

The two kings defeated the king of Moab, and returned in joy to their homes.

Not long after, a certain woman came to the prophet in great sorrow.

"My husband is dead, and I am a poor woman. Because I am in debt and cannot pay what I owe, they will come tomorrow and take away my two sons to make them slaves in payment of the debt."

"Tell me," said the prophet, "what have you in the house now?" "Only a little oil; I have nothing else."

"Go and borrow of your neighbors all the empty vessels you can get. Then close the door, and pour a little of the oil into each of the empty vessels." She did as she was told; and, strange to say, when she looked again, each vessel was filled to the brim.

She ran in haste to the prophet to tell him what had happened. "Now go," he said, "sell the oil. With the money you will have enough to pay your debt and save your sons; and still there will be enough to live on for some time to come."

The prophet often had occasion to pass by a certain city, where there dwelt a very good woman. This woman had prepared a room in her house for Eliseus to use whenever he stopped in the city.

One day he said to her: "Tell me what I can do for you, in return for your kindness to me?" "Alas my Lord," she answered; "there is one thing for which I earnestly pray, but I fear God will not hear my prayer. I have no son; my husband and I are getting on in years, and there will be no one to comfort us in our old age."

"Take courage," he replied; "one year from now God will give you a son." In truth, when the year came round, she had a son, who grew up to be good and beautiful.

One day whilst the boy was out in the field, he complained of a headache. He was taken into the house and laid on his mother's lap, and there he died.

The mother at once placed the dead body of her child in the same bed that was always used by the

prophet when in her house, and without delay, she set out in search of Eliseus, and found him in Mount Carmel.

He saw her coming, and said to his servant, Giezi: "There is the good woman who has been so kind to me."

She came up to him and told him her sad story. At once he commanded his servant thus: "Take my staff, and go to the house of this woman. Speak to no one on the way; and when you are come into the house, lay the staff upon the face of the child."

The servant departed on his errand; but the woman would not leave Eliseus. "No, my lord; I will not go, unless you go with me."

So he accompanied her to the house; and there they found the child still cold and lifeless.

Giezi had done as the prophet commanded, but the child neither moved nor spoke. Then, going into the room alone, Eliseus prayed and touched the child; the flesh grew warm, the eyes opened and the child arose, alive and well. Opening the door, Eliseus called his servant and the woman, and restored the boy to his mother, who fell down at the prophet's feet, thanking him and crying in her joy.

Another day a certain man brought the prophet a gift of twenty loaves of bread and some corn. Eliseus told his servant to distribute it to the people who were around. "Why, this is not enough," the servant answered; "there are a hundred people here, and how can you feed all these with twenty small loaves and a little corn?" "Do as I say," he replied; "for the Lord will make it enough."

And so it was. Though the people were hungry

and ate ravenously, the twenty little loaves and the corn grew and were multiplied; all the people had their fill, and yet there was some left over.

Now it happened that about this time the king of Syria had a general called Naaman; this man was afflicted with the terrible disease of leprosy, and was covered all over with sores.

Naaman had in his house a slave, a young Jewish girl, who had been captured and sold to the Syrian general. One day she said to her mistress: "I wish my master lived in my country; for we have a great prophet there, who could cure him of his disease."

This was told to Naaman, and he made up his mind to go see this prophet, who was no other than Eliseus.

So he set out on his journey, taking with him many and costly presents.

He went first to see the king of Israel, and then went to the house of Eliseus.

The prophet would not so much as come out to him, but sent word to him to bathe seven times in the river Jordan, and he would be cured.

Naaman was angry and went away grumbling: "I thought he would come out to me and would pray over me and touch the sores with his hands, and they would be healed. Why, we have in our own country better rivers than the Jordan. I can bathe in them as well as here." And he was about to return home, when his servant said to him: "If the prophet had asked you to do some great or hard thing, you would have done it; but now he has told you simply to bathe in the river. Try it; perhaps you will be healed." He changed his mind and went down to the banks of the river. Seven times he went in and

bathed; and the seventh time, when he came out, the sores had disappeared, and the leprosy was gone.

Returning in haste to the prophet, who this time received him, he bowed down before him and thanked him for so great a favor, offering him many presents, but Eliseus refused them all, and dismissed him in peace.

In the meantime Giezi, the servant of Eliseus, had seen and heard what took place. Naaman had not gone far on his journey when the servant caught up to him, saying: "My master sent me after you to ask for some silver and two suits of clothes."

Naaman gave them at once; and Giezi, returning home, hid them in the house.

But Eliseus called him: "I saw you when you went after the Syrian. I heard you ask for the silver and the clothes, and saw you receive them. You thought you would be rich. Because you have lied and have done this, the leprosy of Naaman shall stick to you all the days of your life."

Hardly had he spoken when the poor man was covered with sores, and left the house a leper.

A strange thing occurred some time after this, also.

Some of the prophet's companions were felling trees and cutting them up to build houses for themselves near the banks of the river, and the prophet was with them. It happened, as one of them was cutting down a tree, the head of the axe flew off from the handle and sank beneath the waters of the Jordan. The man cried out in dismay, for the axe was not his, but was borrowed.

Eliseus heard him cry out and asked what was the matter. They told him. "Show me where it

fell," he said. Then he cut off a piece of wood and cast it into the water where the iron had sunk. At once the axe rose from the bottom of the river and floated on the surface of the water, then slowly moved towards the shore, whence the man stretched out his hand and recovered it.

About this time the king of Syria sent an army to fight against the king of Israel, and his men lay in hiding. Eliseus warned the king of Israel to be on his guard, for his enemies were in ambush nearby to take him by surprise.

This happened several times and the king of Syria grew very angry, thinking that some of his own men were betraying his plans to the Jews.

He was told that Eliseus, the prophet, who could see hidden things, was the man. So he sent a company of soldiers to seize him and put him to death.

When the soldiers arrived at the city where Eliseus dwelt, the prophet prayed God to save him from the enemy. Immediately the whole company of soldiers were stricken blind, and knew not where they were. They wandered further and further away, and when their sight was restored, they were many miles from the city of the prophet; and so they returned home without finding him.

You remember the good woman who was so kind to Eliseus, and whose son was restored to life. Well, one day the prophet went to her, and warned her: "For seven years there will be a great famine in this land. You must leave here and find a home elsewhere."

So the woman left the city, and for seven years dwelt amongst the Philistines. When the seven years were over, she returned to find her house and

land occupied by another. She went to the king, and when he learned that she was the woman who had been so good to the prophet, he restored to her the house and land, and made her comfortable the rest of her days.

And now Eliseus himself was near the end of his life. He was taken very ill; and whilst he lay on his bed of sickness, the king of Israel came to see him. The prophet told him many things that would happen in the future; among others, that the king would defeat his enemies, the Syrians, and drive them out of the country.

Eliseus died and was buried not far from the city.

Not long after the death of the prophet, a band of robbers came into that part of the country. At the same time a funeral party came along, bearing the dead body of a friend.

When they saw the robbers coming, in great fright they cast the body into the tomb of Eliseus, and ran for their lives.

As soon as the dead body touched the bones of the prophet, it came to life, and the man stood up on his feet. He hid in the tomb till the robbers had passed, then returned to his home, alive and well.

And this is the story of the great prophet Eliseus, who, in his life, did so many wonderful things, and whose dead body, by the power of God, worked the greatest miracle of all.

JONAS.

There was once a rich and beautiful city called Nineve, in the country of Assyria. The people of that city, from the king to the humblest of his subjects, were given up to most wicked crimes. God was angry, and after bearing patiently with them for a long while, He determined to destroy the entire city and its inhabitants. But He wished to give them one more chance to repent of their wickedness and escape the terrible fate in store for them.

Now there lived at this time, not far from the town of Nazareth, in the kingdom of Juda, a very good and holy man named Jonas. Some think he was the son of the widow of Sarepta, the same young man whom the prophet Elias had raised from the dead.

One day the Lord spoke to him and told him that he must go to the city of Nineve and try to turn the people from their wicked ways, warning them that if they did not soon repent, they would all be destroyed.

Jonas did not like the people of Nineve, for they were the enemies of the Jews. Moreover, he was afraid they would not believe him, and would put him to death.

At all events, instead of setting out for the city, he went in the very opposite direction and boarded a ship setting sail for a certain town called Tharsis, in Spain.

Hardly had they set sail, before a terrible storm came up. The waves rose mountain high; the ship

tossed from side to side; and the captain and sailors began to be afraid that all would be lost. As the storm grew wilder and wilder, the sailors threw everything overboard to lighten the vessel; and all the while Jonas was asleep.

Then it occurred to them that perhaps God had sent this storm to show His anger against someone on board the ship, who had disobeyed Him in some way. They determined to draw lots, to see who it might be, and the lot fell to Jonas.

"Who are you?" they asked him. "Whence do you come, and what have you done?"

"I will tell you the truth," Jonas answered: "I am a Jew, and but a short while ago God commanded me to go to Nineve; but I did not wish to go, so I came this way instead."

"What shall we do?" they asked. "Throw me into the sea, and the wind will cease, for it is on my account this storm was sent," said Jonas.

At first they would not do this. Then the storm grew worse and the danger greater; at last, fearing for their own lives, they did throw Jonas into the sea. Immediately the storm ceased, the waves went down, and a great calm ensued; and the ship went on its way in safety, leaving Jonas struggling in the water.

Just as he was about to sink, an enormous fish swam up to him, with its huge mouth wide open. It came nearer and nearer, then, quick as a flash, swallowed him alive.

It was dark and close in the stomach of the monster, and Jonas cried out to the Lord in his terror.

For three days he remained there imprisoned and helpless, but the Lord kept him alive. All this while

the fish was swimming fast across the water; and on the third day it vomited Jonas out of its mouth upon the dry land on the shore, and at once disappeared under the waves to be seen no more.

Jonas fell on his knees in grateful prayer, and thanked the Lord who had spared his life in so wonderful a way.

Then God spoke to him again: "Do what I tell you. Go to Nineve; warn the people of their danger; tell them that if they do not repent of their sins, they will be destroyed."

That time Jonas set out on his journey to Nineve, and, after some days, came to the gates of the city.

It was a magnificent place, full of palaces and temples and monuments, and so large that it took three days to walk around it.

Jonas entered the gate, and all that day, through the streets of the city, he cried in a loud voice: "In forty days Nineve will be destroyed."

Soon a crowd gathered around him, but to all their questions, he answered only one thing: "In forty days Nineve will be destroyed."

Finally they brought him before the king, who asked him: "What does this mean? Who sent you? How do you know that our city will be destroyed?"

Then Jonas told him all; how he had been punished because he would not obey the command of God, and was afterwards saved by the fish, and he added: "The sins of this people have risen to the very heavens, and God is angry with this city. He sent me to tell you that unless everyone of you do penance and cease to do wickedly, He will destroy this city just as surely as He did Sodom and Gomorrha."

The king believed him, and ordered all the people to do penance; and he himself gave the example. He came down from his throne, and, taking off his royal robes, clad himself in sackcloth and put ashes on his head. Then kneeling down in the dust of the street, he prayed for pardon and mercy for himself and for his people. All his subjects, from the greatest to the least, followed his example; and for many days they did penance for their sins, promising to give up their wicked ways and to lead better lives.

This pleased the Lord. His anger was appeased and Nineve was saved.

But Jonas did not know this, because after he had given the warning to king and people, he had gone outside the walls to await what would happen.

There he made a shelter for himself from the burning rays of the sun, then sat down in anxious suspense. As noon drew near, it became hotter and hotter. Suddenly there grew up all around him an ivy; the branches and leaves forming an arch over his head, kept the heat away.

All that day and night Jonas expected the awful disaster, but no fire came down from heaven to destroy the city.

Seeing this, he murmured against God: "Why did You send me to warn these people if You do not intend to punish them?"

The next day the ivy that had sheltered Jonas withered and died; a hot, burning wind began to blow; the sun beat fiercely down. He cried out to God to let him die, he felt so miserable.

Then the Lord answered him: "You are sorry and angry that the ivy is destroyed, and yet, at the same time, you wish Me to destroy this great city, in which

are so many innocent children, even after the people have done penance. Is that right?"

Jonas saw that he was wrong. He begged God's pardon, and leaving the place, set out on his journey home, where he arrived safe and sound.

The rest of his days were spent peacefully; and having lived a good life, he died at a ripe old age, with his friends and family around him.

END OF THE TWO KINGDOMS.

Some years after the death of king Solomon, the Jewish nation was divided into the two kingdoms of Israel and Juda. I must tell you first of the fate of the kingdom of Israel.

It lasted for two hundred and fifty years; and in all that time nineteen kings reigned over the people. Not one of these kings was good, but every one of them turned away from God, and adored the golden calves that Jeroboam had made.

One of the most wicked of these kings was Achab. Now it happened that Achab and the king of Juda, who, at this time, were at peace with each other, went with a great army to fight together against the Syrians.

Just before the battle, Achab changed his royal robes and put on the clothes of a common soldier, because the king of Syria had ordered his men to be on the watch for him, to kill him.

Then the battle began, but the king of Israel could nowhere be found, on account of his disguise.

He could not escape from God, however; and so it happened that one of the Syrian soldiers, shooting at random with his bow and arrow, shot the king of Israel full in the breast, as he was standing in a chariot. With the blood flowing from him he was carried out of the battle, and died in a few hours. So perished that wicked king.

Some time after, there reigned in Israel a king whose name was Phacee, and he also was a wicked man. Therefore, God determined to punish both the people and their wicked king, and sent against them a powerful enemy, the Assyrians.

They poured into the country of Israel with an immense army, captured the cities and towns, and killed many thousands of the people.

Not satisfied with this, they took away many of the inhabitants into Assyria. There the Israelites remained in captivity the rest of their lives, and none of them ever returned to the land of their birth, or saw their homes again.

Soon after this, Phacee was killed by one of his own people.

And now the kingdom of Israel was nearing its end.

For many years the people and their kings had forgotten the true God, and now they were about to be destroyed, and to be a nation no longer.

Some seven hundred years or more before the birth of Christ, there came into the land of Israel another king of Assyria, named Sargon, with a powerful army. He overran the whole country, burning the towns and cities, and destroying them utterly. He took prisoner the king of Israel, bound him in chains and carried him off to Assyria, and

with him all the people of Israel, leaving the land desolate and bare.

In their stead, he sent great numbers of strange people from different countries, to take the place of the Jews and to live in their land.

Many stories have been told of the ten tribes of Israel in their captivity, as they were scattered throughout the land of Assyria.

There they lived in sorrow and in tears; and there they died far from their homes and their native land, exiles in a foreign country.

In the course of time their descendants multiplied and increased, and many wandered far in search of new homes and better conditions, but what became of them, or whither they went, no one can tell. Only this we know, that not one of those taken away ever saw the green hills and rich plains of Israel again.

Thus did God punish them for their evil ways, and such was the sad end of the kingdom of Israel.

The next history to tell you is what happened to the two tribes of the kingdom of Juda.

Most of the kings of Juda were bad, but not all. There was one king, Ezechias, who was faithful to God, and served Him well, therefore, the Lord protected him and helped him.

It seems that on one occasion a certain king of Assyria came with his army into the land of Juda and stood before the city of Jerusalem, intending to capture it, and put all the inhabitants to death.

Soon the supplies in the city gave out. The people and the king prayed to the Lord that He would deliver them from the enemy, for they were in great danger, indeed.

In the middle of the night, while all was quiet and the men were sleeping, an Angel of God came from heaven, unseen and unheard, and with an invisible sword, struck the Assyrians, and one hundred and eighty-five thousand were slain.

When their king awoke the next morning, and saw the countless bodies of the dead, he fled in terror from the scene; and leaving the country of the Jews, he returned to his home, and Jerusalem was saved.

In the course of time, the good king Ezechias was taken very sick, and it was thought that he would certainly die. The prophet Isaías came to him and warned him to prepare for death, but then the king besought the Lord to spare his life a while longer.

"The Lord has heard your prayer," was the answer; "in three days you will be well, for the Lord has added fifteen years to your life."

"How shall I know that this is true?" the king asked.

"What proof would you have?" replied the prophet. "Do you see this sun dial? The shadow will move ten degrees forward or backward; which shall it be?" "Let me see the shadow on the dial go back," said the king, "and I will believe."

No sooner had he spoken than the shadow on the dial moved in the opposite way, as though the sun had turned in its course; and when they looked it had gone back ten degrees.

The king recovered truly, and he did not die till the fifteen years were over.

There came to his court one day, ambassadors from the king of Babylon, and Ezechias foolishly showed them all the riches and treasures of gold and silver that he possessed. Hardly had they

gone, when the prophet came to the king with the message :

"The Lord is angry with you. Because you have shown these men your treasures, the day will come when all your riches will be carried away into Babylon, and your children will also be taken away and made captives in the palace of the king of that country. But because you have been faithful to Me, this will not happen in your day, and your eyes shall not see it." And so it happened, for sometime after Manasses, the son of Ezechias, and a very wicked man, was captured by the king of Babylon, and kept a prisoner many years in his palace far away.

Then came the last days of the kingdom of Juda.

The people began again to forsake the Lord and to forget all that He had done for them. Again and again they sinned and repented and sinned anew, and now God was about to punish them as he had punished the people of Israel.

The last king of the Jews was Sedecias, who lived nearly six hundred years before the coming of Christ.

A great and powerful king came from Babylon with an enormous army, and his soldiers surrounded the city of Jerusalem, and shut it in so that none could go outside, nor could food be brought into the place. Therefore, a terrible famine broke out; the people were dying of hunger by the thousands, and there was no longer any hope of relief.

Sedecias attempted to escape from the city, but was caught and brought before the king of Babylon. His sons were killed right before him, his own eyes were put out, and he was loaded down with chains.

The king of Babylon and his army then entered

the city. They destroyed the houses and set fire to the magnificent Temple that Solomon had built, and soon it was a mass of ruins.

The conqueror left some of the poor people to take care of the land, but the rest, from both Jerusalem and all the country of Juda, he took with him in captivity to Babylon.

It was a sad procession that set out from each town and village of Juda, as the wretched Jews, guarded by the soldiers, wended their way on the march to the land of exile.

As they left their homes, they knelt down in the streets and kissed the ground they were never to tread again. Stern men wept; mothers, with children trudging by their side, sobbed and moaned; the little ones filled the air with their cries. All, old and young, lifting up their eyes dimmed with tears, took a last look at their beloved homes, and bade farewell to the country they felt sure they were leaving forever.

On and on they journeyed, and many fell and died by the wayside, but at last they came to the land of Assyria, the place of their banishment.

There those unhappy people were scattered in different parts of the country; and there they spent, in sorrow and suffering, the weary life of hopeless exiles.

No joy or gladness lighted up the gloom of their sorrow. Neither song of joy nor shout of play was heard among them, for their hearts were heavy with grief.

They have told us in one of the beautiful Psalms something of their sad life in the land of their captivity.

"Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion. On the willows in the midst thereof, we hung up our instruments. For there, they that led us into captivity, required of us the words of songs. And they that carried us away, said: 'Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion.' "

"How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee."

The few Jews who had been allowed to stay in Jerusalem, after a while left the city and went into Egypt, where they remained the rest of their lives, and the ruined city was deserted and dead.

For seventy years the Jews remained in exile; and when that time had passed, a new king reigned in Babylon. He was kind to the Jews and allowed those who were then living of that nation to return to their country.

They came back, rebuilt Jerusalem and the Temple, and for many years dwelt once more in their own land. But they never again had a king of their own, for they were always under the power of others; and so the kingdom of Juda came to an end.

JEREMIAS.

In the days of the good king, Josias, some six hundred years or more before the coming of the Saviour on earth, and while Juda was still a kingdom, there lived in a little town not far from Jerusalem, a young man whose name was Jeremias. He grew up in the love of God and of His holy law, serving Him faithfully and well. He had a tender heart, and could not bear to see suffering or sorrow in others.

One day, when he was about twenty years old, the Lord spoke to him: "I am going to send you before the princes and kings of the people, to tell them the things that shall come to pass; for terrible things, indeed, shall happen to this country and to Jerusalem, and soon the kingdom of Juda shall come to an end."

"I am afraid to go," answered the young man; "the people will not believe me, and will try to kill me." But God promised to be with him and to protect him.

Jeremias, trusting in God, therefore, left his home and began to tell the people all that God had spoken to him. He warned them that their enemies from Babylon would come against them and would capture their cities and kill the inhabitants, because they had forsaken the Lord.

Just as he feared, the Jews became very angry and would not listen to him. The people of his own town tried to kill him; even his own relatives and friends turned against him, and would not believe

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him. Still he continued to warn them that if they did not repent, God would punish them in a terrible way.

In the meantime the good king Josias was killed in battle by the king of Egypt, against whom he was fighting.

Jeremias mourned over his death, for he loved him, and he knew that he had lost his best friend.

Not long after, he was speaking to the Jews, telling them that God was angry with them, and the day of their punishment was near. Soon a great crowd gathered about him, a mob of angry, shouting, wicked men. Some of them cried out:

"Kill him; he is always speaking evil of us; he ought to die."

They made a rush towards him in their blind fury, and were about to tear him to pieces, when some of the princes of the people came upon the scene and rescued him from their hands. By God's command, he wrote in a book all the terrible things that would soon happen to Jerusalem and the whole country of Juda, and sent the book to the king.

Instead of being terrified at the dreadful things that were written there, the king became furious against the prophet. He burned the book and gave orders to have Jeremias arrested and cast into prison.

Fortunately the prophet heard of this in time, and fled away in the darkness of the night.

He remained in hiding for a while, and there he wrote the same things again, and added that before long the king himself would die. Then he sent word to the people that now these fearful disasters were about to come upon them.

In truth, twice the king of Babylon came to Jeru-

salem and captured the city; and each time he took many of the inhabitants away to his own country.

A new king now reigned in Jerusalem. For a while he was kind to Jeremias and listened to his words.

One day the prophet had occasion to leave the city, to go to a town not far off. Hardly had he passed the gates of the city, when the people, seeing him, cried out:

"He is going to the enemy and will betray us into their hands."

"It is not so," Jeremias answered; "I am not going to the enemy."

They would not listen to him, but cast him into a dungeon full of mud and slime and dark as midnight, and there they left him to die.

The king was sorry for him, however, and after a while ordered his men to take him out of the dungeon and put him in a place that was not quite so bad; and there the prophet remained till Jerusalem was captured by the enemy.

Now the words of Jeremias were bound to come true, since they were also the words of God.

The king of Babylon came again before Jerusalem with an army, captured the city, burned the Temple, and carried away the people prisoners to his own country. He killed the sons of the Jewish king in their father's sight; then he put out the king's eyes, and binding him in chains, took him away with his people.

He was good to Jeremias, however, for he brought him out of prison and gave him the choice either to go with his people into Babylon, or to remain in Jerusalem. Jeremias preferred to remain; and when the

king and his army had gone, the prophet roamed through the streets of the ruined city, weeping and lamenting over the sad sights that greeted his eyes on all sides.

The grand Temple, built by Solomon in the days of his glory, was a mass of burned and blackened ruins; the houses were empty, the streets were silent. No longer were heard the songs of gladness and the shouts of joy; all was ruin, desolation, sadness and death.

Overwhelmed with sorrow, he sat with head bowed down among the ruins of his beloved city, and in the sadness of his heart, he cried out:

"How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people! Weeping, she hath wept in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks; there is none to comfort her among all them that were dear to her. O all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow."

The king of Babylon had left a few of the poorer people in Jerusalem and the country around, and had placed over them a governor to rule them.

Some time after the king had departed, this governor was murdered; whereupon the Jews, fearing the king would return and kill them all, made up their minds to leave the country and go down into Egypt.

In vain Jeremias begged them not to go, warning them they would never return alive. They would not listen, and began to prepare for the journey.

Now, a strange event took place before they set out on their march.

In the Holy of Holies of the great Temple rested the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark contained the

two tables of the Commandments, written by the hand of God on Mount Sinai; also a vessel filled with manna, the bread that came down from heaven and fed the Jews during the forty years of their wandering in the desert. Now, it seems that before the Temple was destroyed, the Jewish priests had taken the Ark away and hidden it somewhere in the city. Jeremias, accompanied by some of the people, took the Ark from its hiding place and set out with it to Mount Nebo, on the other side of the Jordan. This was the same mountain from the top of which Moses saw the Promised Land, which he was not allowed to enter. When they came to the mountain, they found there a large cave. Jeremias placed the Ark in the cave, then closed the entrance.

All of a sudden the cave disappeared; and when they tried to mark the place that they might recognize it if they ever came back, it was nowhere to be found, search as much as they would.

From that day to this, the Ark has never been seen, and the cave never discovered; for God hid it from the eyes of men in that most wonderful manner.

But some day, perhaps, He will let it be found; for the prophet spoke to those who were with him:

"This place shall remain hidden till God gathers His people together again; and then will the Ark be restored."

Then they set out on their journey to Egypt, taking Jeremias with them.

There he lived for many days, mourning over his fallen country and the sad lot of his sinful people. Again and again he warned them that God would punish them yet more, if they did not repent; for

now they had turned to the false gods of Egypt, and had forgotten the Lord, the true God.

One, day in their blind anger, tired of his warnings, which they would not heed, they stoned him to death; and so he died, murdered by the hands of his own ungrateful people.

TOBIAS.

There once lived in the city of Nineve a good and holy man named Tobias, with his wife and only child, a boy.

He was one of the Jews who were carried away captive into Assyria, with the ten tribes of Israel.

Though Tobias was poor, he gave what little he had to those poorer than himself. He fed the hungry, clothed the naked and buried the bodies of those who were slain.

The king heard of this and gave orders that Tobias was to be arrested and put to death. But learning of it in time, he fled with his wife and child, and remained in hiding until the death of the wicked king, soon after, when he returned to his home without fear of any more trouble.

One day while he was giving a dinner to a few of his friends, his son came in and whispered in his ear. At once he got up from the table and left the house. He went into one of the streets not far off, and there he found the dead body of a Jew, who had been killed by the people of the town. He carried the body home and buried it secretly in the quiet and darkness of the night.

All his friends blamed him when they heard of this.

"Don't you remember," they said, "that once you came near being killed yourself on account of this?"

"I fear God more than man," he answered; "and I know that God will protect me."

Now, not long after, it happened that Tobias had spent the whole day burying the bodies of Jews who had been killed, and when evening came he was tired and lay down to rest by the wall of his house.

Whilst he was asleep, some dirt fell from a swallow's nest directly over his head. The dirt fell into his eyes and made them sore, and in a few days he was totally blind.

From that day he became poorer and poorer; at last his wife was obliged to go out and work to obtain food for them all.

With all their troubles, though, Tobias spoke no word of complaint, but his wife was not as patient as he. One evening she returned from her work, bringing a young goat she had received in payment for her labor.

Tobias heard the bleating of the animal and was afraid she might have come by it dishonestly.

"How did you get this goat?" he asked. "I hope you have not taken it unjustly. It matters not how poor we are, we must not take what does not belong to us."

Then the wife's patience gave way altogether, and she cried out in anger: "No, I have not taken it unjustly, but I worked for it. And it would have been better for us if you had worked as hard, instead of giving away all that you had and doing for others.

What good has all this done you? It has made us poor as we are today, and God has forgotten us."

Tobias answered nothing, but only sighed, and in his heart prayed to God: "O God, You see our sorrow and trouble; yet all that You have done is just and good. If it be Your will, let me die; for it is better for me to be with You, than to be suffering as I am on earth."

And as he prayed, an Angel of the Lord carried his prayer up to heaven, to the throne of God.

Now I must leave Tobias for a while and take you to a city called Rages, in the far-off country of the Medes.

There lived in this city a pious Jew named Raguel, who had a daughter Sara.

She was a good and loving daughter, spending her days in prayer and good works.

But God sent a terrible trial to her. She was married to a young man of the same city, and on the very night of the wedding, a devil came and killed her husband. When the young girl woke up in the morning, she found him dead by her side. Again she was married, and again the devil came in the night; and her husband was found dead in the morning. Seven times was she married, and each time her husband was killed the same night.

At last no one would dare marry her, thinking the same thing might happen again. Her own servants mocked her, "May you never have another husband, for you have killed seven already," they said.

But all this happened through no fault of hers, and with tears she prayed that God would free her from this dreadful curse.

And as she prayed, the Angel of the Lord carried her prayer also to the throne of God, and it was heard.

Now we must go back to Tobias. Thinking that he was soon to die, he called his son to him one day: "My son, God will soon take me out of this world to a better one. When I am gone you must be loving and kind to your mother, and take good care of her all the days of her life." "If you are faithful to God and your mother, you will be safe and will prosper."

"I must tell you that in my better days, I once loaned a great sum of money to a relative of mine, named Gabelus, in a city of the Medes. I wish you to go to him and try to get the money; it will be enough to support your mother and you for a long time."

"Certainly I will go, father; but the city is far from here, and I know not the way."

"God will show you the way, and will provide a guide for you."

So the young Tobias went out to look for a guide. Hardly had he left the house, when he saw a handsome young man, tall and straight, with a staff in his hand, equipped for a journey.

"Who are you?" asked Tobias, saluting him courteously.

"I am one of the children of Israel."

"Do you know the way that leads to the country of the Medes?" "I do; and more than that, I know that there lives in a city there a relative of yours, for I have been in his house; his name is Gabelus."

In great joy, the young Tobias went in to his father, and told him that he had found a man who

knew Gabelus, and where he lived, and the road they must take.

Tobias called him in. When he entered, the young guide saluted the holy man with these words: "Joy be to you always."

"Alas," he answered, "what joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness and see not the light of heaven?"

"Be of good courage," said the young man, "your cure from God is near at hand. I will guide your son to his journey's end, and bring him back to you in safety."

Then the old man blessed the two, and prayed that God might send his good Angel to conduct them on their way.

The young Tobias kissed his mother and father good-bye, and with his companion, set out on his long journey to the land of the Medes.

They traveled all that day; and when it was evening, they stopped by the banks of the river, to rest and take their supper. Whilst Tobias was washing his feet in the water, a great fish swam up to him and tried to devour him. He cried out in terror. "Do not be afraid," said his companion, "catch hold of it by the gills, and drag it out of the water." Tobias caught the fish, and pulling with all his strength, drew it on the dry land, where for a while it gasped and panted, then died. "Now," the guide said, "we will have enough food to last us the rest of our journey. Take out the heart, the gall and the liver of the fish, and keep them; you will find a use for them later on."

"Of what use are they?" asked Tobias.

"If a piece of the heart or liver be put on burning coals," was the reply, "it will drive away all kinds of

devils from either man or woman, so that they cannot return. The gall is good for sore eyes, and to restore sight to the blind."

The next morning they resumed their journey, and after some days, came safely to the country of the Medes, and to the city where Raguel dwelt: "Where shall we lodge?" asked Tobias, as they entered the city. "There lives in this city," answered his companion, "a relative of yours named Raguel, who has an only child, a daughter, Sara by name. Ask for her in marriage, and you will inherit all her father's riches."

"O I have heard of her," cried out Tobias. "She is the young woman who married seven husbands, and each one was killed by a devil the very night of the wedding. I do not want to be killed as they were."

"I will tell you why they were killed. They were bad men, and never thought of God nor cared for Him. When they were married, they said not one prayer to Him; and, therefore, the devil had power over them and killed them."

"But when you marry the young woman, for three days you and she must spend the time in prayer; then the devil cannot hurt you. And on the first night of your wedding, take some of the heart and liver of the fish and burn them in the room; the devil will be driven away, and will never come back."

So they went to Raguel's house; and when he heard who Tobias was, he received him and his companion with great rejoicing, and prepared a fine supper that evening. Whilst they were at the table, Tobias took courage and said: "I will not eat or drink until you first promise me your daughter in

marriage." At this the father grew sad, for already he loved the young man, and did not like to see him killed.

"Be not afraid to give him your daughter," said the companion of Tobias, "for God has intended that he should have her." So the father consented, and that very evening they were married.

At night, Tobias did as his friend had said. He took a part of the heart and liver of the fish and threw them into the fire. A wonderful thing came about. Unseen by the young couple, God sent a powerful Angel from heaven down into that room. There, hiding near the bed, was a terrible devil waiting to kill the young man. The Angel caught the devil, took him through the air far away into the country of Egypt, and left him bound and helpless in the desert.

All that night Tobias and his wife knelt in prayer, begging that God would save them from danger.

In the meantime, Raguel, instead of sleeping that night, left the house secretly, and going into the garden, he dug a grave for the body of Tobias.

Early in the morning he sent some one into the room, thinking to find him dead, when, to his surprise and joy, he was told that Tobias was sleeping peacefully, safe and sound.

Going out then, he filled up the grave he had dug.

For three nights young Tobias and his wife spent the time in prayer, and by that time all danger was passed.

Raguel made another great feast, and gave to his son-in-law the half of all his riches.

In the meantime, the companion left the city for a short while, and went further on to the city where

Gabelus lived, who owed the sum of money to Tobias' father. Gabelus willingly paid the money, and also came back with the guide to see Tobias and take part in the joy and feasting.

After two weeks, Tobias and his wife and his companion set out on their journey home.

Whilst all this was going on, far off in their lonely home Tobias and his wife were grieving over the long absence of their child.

"Woe is me, my son!" cried out the poor mother; "why did we send you to a strange country; you who were the light of our eyes and the staff of our old age, the only comfort of our life? We ought not to have let you go."

Tobias' only answer was: "God is good, and will bring back our son to us in safety."

But she would not be comforted; and every day she went out beyond the city, to the road by which her son had gone, watching and hoping that perhaps she might see him coming in the distance.

Day after day she looked in vain, and each time returned home more sad and downcast.

At length one day, as she sat wearily waiting on the summit of a hill, from which she could see a long stretch of the road, she spied two men in the distance. They came nearer and she recognized her son and his companion.

She hurried home to tell her husband; and before she could run back to meet them, they were at the door.

The poor blind father rose to his feet, and ran stumbling to meet his son. He kissed him again and again, and they all wept for joy, then knelt down to thank God, Who had answered their prayer.

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"You have not seen all of God's kindness yet," said the young Tobias; "Wait."

Then he took some of the gall of the fish, and rubbed it on his father's eyes. In a few minutes a white scale came off the old man's eyes, and immediately his sight was restored.

A few days after came Sara and a long train of servants and camels and cattle, bringing the wealth that Tobias had gotten in the country of the Medes. He had left them behind and had hurried with his companion, that he might reach his father's home the sooner.

When the good old couple saw all these things coming, they were filled with astonishment, and could not thank God enough. In his gratitude, the father cried out: "What shall we do to reward the good friend and companion who was your guide, who has done so much for you and for me? What can we give him?"

"Father," answered the young Tobias, "let us give him half of all that we have; for without him we would have nothing. Besides, he saved my life and cured your blindness."

So they called the young man, and thanking him again and again, begged him to take half of all their riches.

For a few moments he answered not a word. And as they looked at him, he seemed to grow more and more beautiful, and a strange brightness shone all around him. Then he spoke:

"While I was with you, you knew not who I was. I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven great Spirits who stand before the throne of God. I seemed to eat and drink as you do, but I did not,

for I have a different food and drink that you cannot see.

"Before I came to you, when you prayed with tears, and buried the dead, and even left your dinner and hid the dead in your house and buried them by night, it was I who offered your prayers and good works to God. This is why He sent me to you, to save your son and restore your sight, and to make you comfortable and happy the rest of your days.

"My work is done, and now it is time I returned to Him who sent me, and to my home in heaven."

Saying this, he disappeared from their sight and was seen no more.

Falling on the ground, Tobias and his wife and son again and again gave thanks to God for His great mercy and kindness. And for many years after they lived in prosperity and happiness.

Tobias the elder lived to the good old age of one hundred and two years; and dying in peace, he was followed soon after by his wife. After his parents' death, the younger Tobias left Nineve, and went with all his family—for he had many children now—to dwell with Raguel, his father-in-law, in the country of the Medes.

There he grew richer and richer, and lived a long and good life. He died at the age of ninety-nine years, with his children and grandchildren around him.

JUDITH.

One hundred years and more before the destruction of the kingdom of Juda, a powerful king reigned in the land of Assyria; and this king determined to make all nations and people obey him and serve him.

So he sent an enormous army into every country. Wherever his soldiers went, they destroyed the cities, and either killed the inhabitants or took them captive.

At the head of this army was a brave but cruel man, whose name was Holofernes. At his approach all the people were filled with terror and dread; no place could stand against him or stop the march of his soldiers.

At last he came into the land of Israel, and rested before a town of the Jews that was called Bethulia.

He sent word to the people of the town to open the gates to him at once. Instead of obeying, they prepared to resist him.

This made him furious, and he determined to kill everyone in the town, men, women and children.

Now he had amongst his soldiers a man named Achior, a leader of the people of Ammon, neighbors of the Jews. This man and his people had been captured by Holofernes a short while before, and had been compelled to serve in his army.

He called Achior, and asked him: "Who are these people that dare refuse to obey, and think that they can fight against me? What makes them so foolish and rash?"

"These are the people of Israel who came out of Egypt," answered Achior; "and the God whom they worship is a great and powerful God. As long as they serve Him, He protects them and makes them victorious over all their enemies; but when they sin against Him and forget Him, He leaves them defenceless and alone. So you would do well to find out if these people have done any wrong against their God. If they have, you will conquer them and capture their city, but if they have not, you can do nothing against them, for He will fight for them and protect them."

This made Holofernes more angry than ever. "And who are you," he cried out, "who dare tell me that I cannot overcome these people, and that I shall fail? Are you one of them? You will see if their God can prevent me from taking this city."

Then he commanded his servants to seize Achior, bind him hand and foot, and carry him out in the fields near the walls of the city. There they tied him to a tree and left him, saying: "Let the people of Israel come after you now, and take you into their city, and when our master captures the place you will be the first to be slain."

The Jews saw him and, loosing him from the tree, brought him into the town. He told them all that had taken place, and they comforted him: "Have no fear; God will protect us from this man, and you will be safe amongst us."

And now Holofernes and his army moved nearer the city.

Not far off was the stream that supplied the town with water. Therefore, what did Holofernes do, but turn the course of the stream another way, so

that it no longer flowed into the town, and the people could get no water to drink. He knew that the little they had would last only a few days, and then they must either open their gates to him or die of thirst.

When the Jews found out what he had done, they were seized with fear, and prayed more earnestly to God for help.

At last they determined, if no help came in five days, to open the gates, and let the enemy in.

Now there lived in Bethulia at this time, a certain rich and beautiful woman named Judith.

She had lost her husband, and after his death she lived a quiet life alone with her servants, spending her time in prayer and good works.

When she heard that the people were about to give way to despair, she upbraided them: "Why do you set a time for God? You do wrong and should have more patience. God will help you when He sees fit, whether it be in five days or more. But now pray for me; and if God will help me, I will free you from your enemy."

She went into her house and, falling on her knees, prayed: "O God, look on me, your poor servant, and give me strength, and protect me when I go into the camp of the enemy." Saying this, she dressed herself in her finest and costliest garments and adorned herself with gold and precious stones, till she seemed the most beautiful woman on earth. She took a maid servant with her and set out from the town. Passing through the gates of the city, she came into the open country, nearer and nearer to the camp of the Assyrians.

At last some of the soldiers saw her and, sur-

rounding her, asked: "Who are you, and whither are you going?"

"I am a Hebrew woman from the city, and I am going with my servant to Holofernes, your general, to ask him to spare my life, for I am afraid he will capture the city and kill all the people."

"You need not be afraid," they answered, "he would not kill so beautiful a woman as you. We will take you to the general."

So they brought her to Holofernes; and when he saw her, he was struck with astonishment at her wonderful beauty.

"Have no fear," he exclaimed; "I will protect you and see that you come to no harm. After I have captured this city, I will take you back to my country and make you my wife. You shall live with me in peace and happiness, and in the enjoyment of all that you can desire."

During four days she remained in the camp of the Assyrians, living in a tent not far from the general's. No one molested her, and every night she went out to spend the hours in prayer.

The fourth day, Holofernes sent for her: "To-night we shall have a great feast, and I wish you to come and enjoy the good things we have."

She promised, and when evening drew nigh, went to the great tent where he lived, and there a magnificent feast was spread.

The big tent was decorated in all colors, the table was laden down with the richest food and rarest wines; everything was of the best.

Judith seemed more beautiful than ever, and when Holofernes looked at her, he admired and loved her more and more.

After a while he began to grow drowsy from so much drinking. Then the feast came to an end, and the guests all arose to depart—all except Judith.

She waited till they were quite gone, then looking out the tent door, beckoned to her servant and bade her stand by the entrance. Then she went in again and saw the general lying on a couch in a drunken slumber. His heavy breathing showed that he was sleeping soundly and would not easily awake.

Judith murmured a short prayer to God for help and strength; then, taking the big sword that lay by Holofernes' side, she raised it, and with one mighty blow, and then another, cut off his head. She rolled the dead body under the couch, and, taking the head, went to the door of the tent, where the servant woman was in waiting. Judith now gave the head, all dripping with blood, to the woman to hide in a bag they carried with them, and they at once set out for the city.

It was dark, for night had fallen long before, and no one stopped them on the way. Coming to the gates of the town, Judith cried out to the watchman: "Let me in; I am Judith."

As soon as she entered, a crowd gathered around her, to whom she showed the bleeding head of Holofernes.

Immediately the news spread like wildfire throughout the city, that the Assyrian general had been killed by Judith, and the Jews gathered all their soldiers together to march out with great shouting and noise, to the camp of the enemy. Hearing the tumult, the chiefs of the Assyrians came rushing to Holofernes' tent, and there they saw the horrible sight of his headless body all covered with blood.

Fear and confusion seized upon them all; they knew not what to do. They thought only of saving themselves; and with a great cry of terror, the whole Assyrian army turned and fled by the ways of the fields and the paths of the hills.

When the Jews came up to the camp, it was empty; and of all that vast army, not one man was to be seen.

Messengers were sent through all the country to tell the news. From every city and town in Israel, soldiers poured out in pursuit of the fleeing enemy, killing and capturing many, till they all disappeared from the land; the remnant returning to the country from which they came.

Then there was great rejoicing; and the people of Bethulia grew rich from all the treasures that were taken from the deserted camp, gold and silver and cattle and beasts.

And from that day, Judith was a great woman in her city and in all the country of the Jews, because she had delivered her people from their dreaded enemy.

She lived many years after this in peace and joy, and died at the good old age of one hundred and five years, mourned by all in the land.

ESTHER.

In the distant land of Persia, there once ruled a mighty king whose name was Assuerus. His power was so great that he reigned over more than a hundred provinces, and there was none like him in all the world.

One day he made a great feast, and invited first his friends and nobles, and then all the people of the city.

The feast was held in the gardens of the king's palace.

It was a magnificent scene. The place was decorated with hangings of blue and green and purple, suspended from marble pillars; at night, lanterns and lights of every color made the garden look like fairyland. The guests reclined upon gold and silver couches, and drank out of golden cups. The tables were loaded down with dishes of choicest meats and rarest fruits.

And for days everyone ate and drank all they would, and enjoyed the king's festivity.

On the last day, he sent word to Vasthi, his queen, to come to the banquet hall, that he might show his people how beautiful she was with the royal crown upon her head.

Now, it happened that day that the queen herself was having a feast with the women of her palace, and she sent word to the king that she could not come.

At this, Assuerus became very angry, and he asked his friends and advisers what he should do to

punish the queen's disobedience. And they answered him: "O king, the queen has done you a great wrong. She has set at naught your authority and power, and by her disobedience has given a bad example to all the wives of the kingdom, who will say: 'We need not obey our husbands, for the queen did not obey her's. Therefore, let her no longer be your queen; put her away, and chose another who will obey you better.'"

This advice pleased the king; he sent poor Vasthi away, and she never saw him again.

Then he ordered his servants to search through every city and town in his kingdom for the most beautiful women they could find, and to bring them to him, that he might choose the one that pleased him most.

Now, there lived at this time in the king's city, a Jew by the name of Mardochai, a good and pious man; and he had a neice, an orphan girl, whom he had brought up as his own child. Esther, for that was her name, was most fair and beautiful, and when the king's servants heard of her, they took her with the other young women, to be presented to the king.

As soon as the king saw her, he was struck with admiration at her exceeding beauty; and placing upon her head the royal crown, he took her as his wife, and made her queen of all his kingdom.

He did not know she was a Jewess, because Mardochai had commanded her to say nothing of her country or her people.

The king, then, to celebrate his marriage, gave a great dinner to all the court, and presented to them the new queen, who came before them dressed in

magnificent robes, bearing the crown upon her head—the most beautiful woman they had ever seen.

One day whilst Mardochai was resting near the king's palace, as he was accustomed often to do, he heard two men talking. Something they said aroused his attention. He was hidden, and as they thought no one was near, he heard every word they spoke. What was his horror to learn that they were plotting to murder the king. He went at once to Assuerus and told him all he had heard. The men were arrested, and confessing their guilt, were hanged on a gibbet. The story of the whole affair was written down in the books of the palace, and Mardochai was soon forgotten.

In the palace there was a man by the name of Aman, in high favor with the king, who sought his counsel and followed his advice in all things.

Everybody was afraid of this man; and when he came near, they bowed down before him even to the very ground.

Mardochai alone would not bend his knee nor bow to him. When Aman noticed this, he grew very angry, and made up his mind to have him put to death. He knew that Mardochai was a Jew, and in his rage and hatred he determined to put an end to all the Jews, scattered in every part of the great kingdom. So one day he said to Assuerus: "O king, there is in every province of your kingdom a people who are different from us in everything; they follow a different religion and have strange customs and ways of living. They are a menace to your safety, for some day they may rebel against you, and do great harm. If you will order me to have them all

put to death, I will pay a large sum of money into your treasury."

The king granted his request and gave him permission to have all the Jews in the kingdom put to death on a certain day.

He wrote letters also to all the governors and chiefs of the provinces, to see that it was done.

When the Jews heard of this, they were seized with fear. Wailing and weeping, they prayed to God to deliver them from this latest danger. And God heard their prayer.

As soon as Mardochai learned of the cruel decree, he sent word to Esther that the king was about to put all the Jews to death.

"What can I do?" she answered. "For the last thirty days he has not called for me, and I cannot see him. You know there is a law, that any one who comes into the king's presence unbidden shall be killed at once. I am afraid to go." "You must go to him," Mardochai told her. "If you do not, you also shall die, for the king will find out that you are a Jewess. But have no fear; God will be with you. Go boldly to the king, and ask him to spare our lives; he may do that for you, for he loves you tenderly. It was for this that God has placed you here as queen, that you might save your people."

"I will go," she answered; "but you and all our people must pray that God may be with me and help me."

Three days after that, Esther, clothed in magnificent robes and adorned with jewels of rarest beauty, prepared to go unbidden into the king's presence.

Never had she seemed more handsome, but under the rosy color of her face, and her gracious and

bright eyes, she hid a mind full of anguish and exceeding great fear, not knowing but that she was going to her death.

Leaning upon two of her maids, she passed through all the doors and stood before the king as he sat upon his royal throne, clothed in his kingly robes, glittering with gold and precious stones; and he was terrible to behold.

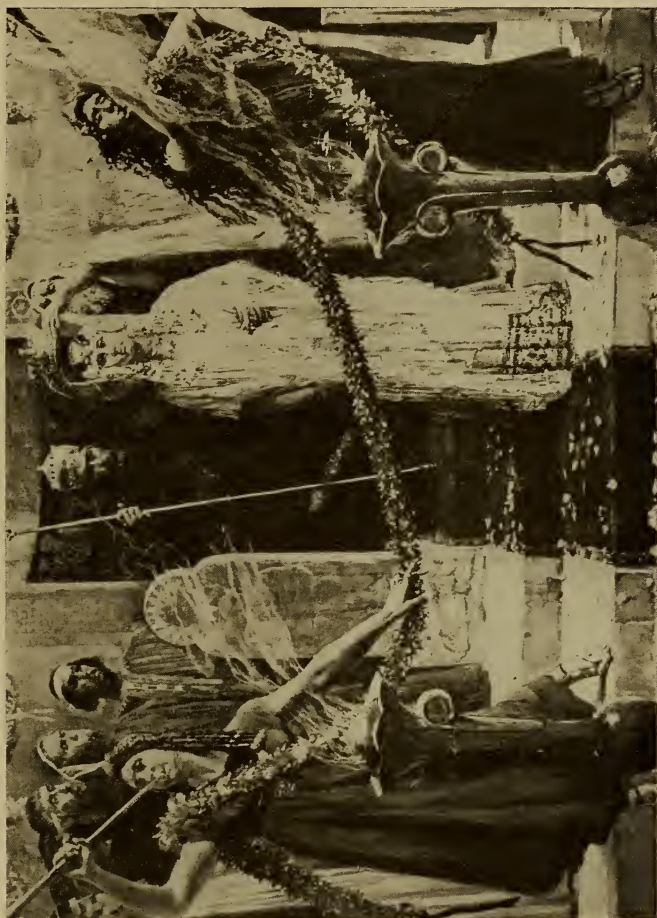
He looked angrily at her, and his blazing eyes showed the wrath of his heart. The queen sank down in terror, her face turned pale, and she rested her head upon her servant's shoulder. At once the king was seized with pity, seeing her so beautiful and helpless, and leaping down from his throne, he came to her and lifted her up. "Fear not, Esther," he exclaimed; "you shall not die; this law is for others, not for you."

Seeing that she did not answer, he cried out: "Speak, Esther! why do you not speak to me? Be not afraid, for no harm shall come to you. Ask of me anything you wish; though it be the half of my kingdom, you shall have it."

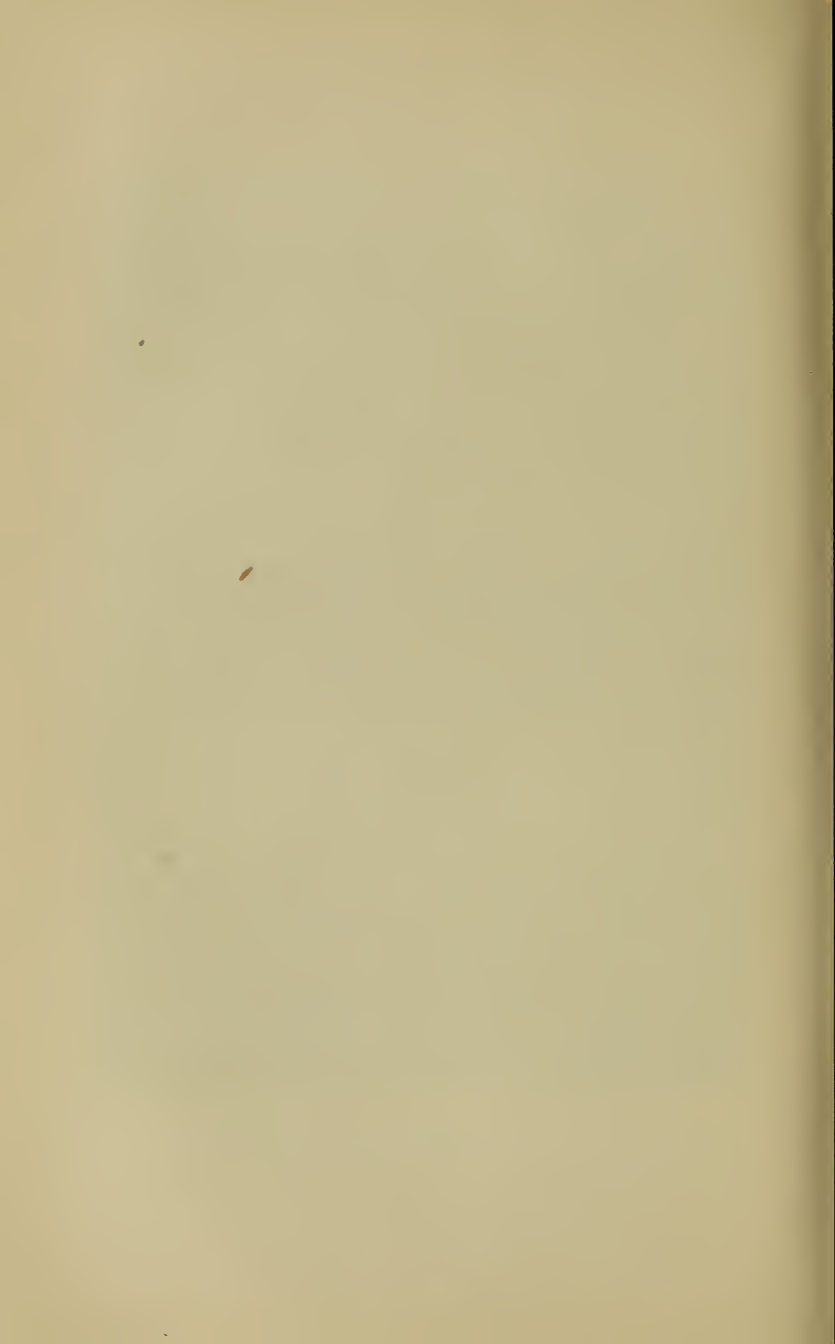
Then the queen raised her head and spoke: "My lord, when I saw you on your throne, I was afraid, for you were like unto a terrible angel. But now I beseech you, do me this favor; come—and Aman with you—to a banquet I have prepared for you today."

The king promised readily, and when the hour arrived, he and Aman went to the banquet the queen had prepared.

In the course of the dinner, he asked her again: "What do you wish me to do for you? Ask for anything you desire, and you shall have it."



ESTHER BEFORE THE KING.



"If I have found favor in your sight," she answered, "I beg that you and Aman will come again to my banquet tomorrow." The king promised to come.

Aman was overjoyed at the favor the queen had shown him. Going out of the palace, he saw Mardochai sitting on the steps at the entrance. Aman looked at him with eyes of hate, but Mardochai would not so much as rise up to salute him.

Aman went home to his wife and friends, and told them all that had happened, adding: "I met that Jew Mardochai, and he would not even rise up to salute me. I hate that man, and cannot get rid of him soon enough." "As you are in such great favor with the king," answered his wife, "you need not be afraid to make an end of Mardochai. Have a gibbet built in your garden here, and ask the king to let you hang the Jew upon it." This pleased the wicked man, for it was just what he wanted; and so he returned to the palace to make the request.

That night the king could not sleep, and he ordered his servants to read to him the annals of his kingdom. When they came to the story of the plot to murder the king, that was discovered and prevented by Mardochai, he stopped them and asked: "What reward did this man ever receive?" They told him he had received no reward, except a few presents.

"Is any one in attendance in the palace now?"

"Yes, Aman is just outside the door."

"Call him in."

So Aman came in, intending to ask that he might put Mardochai to death. Before he could speak, the

king said to him: "Tell me what I should do. There is a man whom I wish to honor. How shall I do it."

Aman thought that he himself must be the man, and answered: "Let him be clothed in the king's robes and placed upon the king's horse; and let one of the great nobles of the palace go before him, crying out to all the people: 'Behold the man whom the king wishes to honor.'"

Hardly had he finished these words, when, to his great surprise and consternation, the king commanded: "Make haste, and go to Mardochai, the Jew, for he is the man. Do all that you have said, and see to it that you do not leave out a single thing." Aman was obliged to obey. When morning came, he clothed Mardochai in the king's own robe, and setting him on the king's horse, went before him through the streets of the city, crying out to all the people: "Thus is he honored, whom the king wishes to honor."

Furious, he returned to his own home; but soon the king's servants came after him to bid him attend the queen's banquet.

The king and Aman went in to the dinner, and again the king asked: "What is your petition, Esther? Ask of me anything you wish, and it shall be granted."

Then the queen fell on her knees before him, crying out: "O king, spare my life and that of my people, for we are given up to be slain and to perish."

"Why, who has done this?" he exclaimed in great surprise. Esther answered: "It is this man here, your servant Aman; it is he who caused you to order the death of all my people, for I am a Jewess; and now I pray for my life and theirs."

"Fear not," said the king; "you shall not die, nor your people, but this man shall not live another day."

He called his servants, and ordered them to bind Aman hand and foot. Some one told him of the high gibbet built in the garden for Mardochai. "Take him there at once, and hang him upon it," said the king. And so it was done, and this was the end of that most wicked man.

Then Esther told the king that Mardochai was her uncle, and to him was given the place that Aman had occupied in the palace.

The king did more; he wrote letters to all the governors and chiefs throughout his kingdom, to protect the Jews, and not allow them to be put to death.

And so all things turned out well. The Jews rejoiced when they heard the good news, and kept the day of their deliverance as a great holiday with feasting and gladness.

Queen Esther lived many years longer; Mardochai became a great man in the kingdom, the counsellor and friend of the king, and the Jews dwelt in peace and quiet in all the land of Persia.

DANIEL.

You remember that I told you in another story how the king of Babylon came to the land of the Jews, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and carried away many of the inhabitants into his own country.

Among the captives was a beautiful boy, whose

name was Daniel. He belonged to the family of the Jewish king, and not only was he pleasing in look and manner, but, better still, he was a good and pious lad.

The king of Babylon took a great liking to him, and sent him to be taught in the same school with the children of the great nobles of the land. There the boy advanced in knowledge and wisdom above all his companions. In a few years he was known all over the city as one of the wisest men in the kingdom.

All this time he would not adore the idols or false gods of the people around, but prayed to the one true God, and served him faithfully.

He often went amongst his people, the Jews, who had been taken away from their country into this distant land, and comforted them and helped them in every way he could.

Now there lived in the city, in those days, a most beautiful woman named Susanna, a pious and virtuous young Jewess. Her husband was very wealthy, and they lived in a fine house surrounded with beautiful grounds. Among those who came frequently to this house were two old men who were leaders among the Jews.

One day Susanna was walking alone in the garden, some distance from the house, when she met these two men, who were hiding there on purpose.

Seeing them, she was about to turn away, but they came up and, to her horror and dismay, threatened that if she would not commit a certain wicked crime, they would accuse her of it before all the people, and have her put to death.

Frightened as she was, she cried out: "I will not

do this evil that you wish. God will protect me, and will not let me come to harm."

Thereupon the two men, calling out to the servants in the house to come to the garden in haste, before them all, accused the innocent young woman of the crime. She protested again and again that she was innocent, but every one believed the old men, and the young girl was condemned to death.

They were leading her out to die, when the sad procession passed near the palace gate, where Daniel happened to be seated.

"What does this mean? What is the matter?" he cried out. They told him the whole story.

"This woman is not guilty, and you are about to shed innocent blood." At this, they all stopped in amazement, and he accompanied them back to the judgment hall.

He ordered the two old men to be placed in separate rooms, where they could not speak one to the other. Then before the young woman and all the people, he had the first one brought in and questioned: "You saw this girl commit the crime of which you accuse her?" "I did;" was the answer. "Tell us, then, under what tree was she when it was done?" "Under a mastic tree." Daniel sent that one away and called the other. "Tell me; did you see the girl commit this crime?" "I did;" answered the old man. "Under which tree was it done?" "Under an oak tree." At this everyone in the room cried out; for they saw that the men had lied, and that the girl was innocent. She was set at liberty at once, and sent to her home in honor. But the two wicked old men were sentenced to death in her place; and before they died, they confessed that they

had made up the whole story, and the young girl was guiltless.

The fame of Daniel's wisdom spread now through all the land; and amongst all the wise men at the court of the king, Daniel was first.

One night whilst the king was sleeping soundly in his bed, he had a dream which terrified him greatly, and he was disturbed in his sleep and frightened. When he awoke in the morning, he remembered his fear, but what the dream was he had entirely forgotten.

Calling together all his wise men, he said to them: "Last night I had a terrible dream, which disturbed me greatly. Tell me what the dream was, for it has passed from my memory; and tell me what it means."

"O king," they answered, "let us know your dream, and we will tell you what it means." "Did I not say that I had forgotten it?" he exclaimed. "You are wise men, and know all about dreams. If some one of you cannot tell me the dream, I will have you all put to death."

Daniel was not in the palace when this was going on; and it was later that he heard the king had ordered all the wise men to be killed because no one could tell him his dream.

Without hesitation, he went in to the king and promised that in a few days he would tell him all about the dream and what it meant. He spent these days in prayer, beseeching God to reveal it to him. At the end of the time given him, he went again to the king, and said:

"I know the dream, and it is this: Whilst you were asleep you saw an enormous statue; the head

was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the stomach and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet partly of iron and partly of clay. And whilst you were still gazing at it, a stone came rolling down the side of the hill, sent by invisible hands. The stone struck the statue and broke it all to pieces; then the stone began to grow larger and larger, till it became a great mountain.

"Now this is the meaning of the dream: God has shown you by it, what is going to take place in the years to come.

"You are a great king, powerful and strong; your kingdom is the head of gold. After you will come another king, not so great nor strong; he is the breast and arms of silver. After that another king will arise, and he is the brass. After him, the fourth kingdom will be as iron; and this kingdom will be divided into smaller ones, which are the iron and the clay together. And after a while God will set up another kingdom, of a different kind entirely, and this kingdom will conquer all the others; this is the stone rolling down from the mountain.

"All this will come to pass before the end of the world."

Hearing this, the king was struck with admiration at the wisdom of Daniel, and he made him governor of all Babylon and first in the kingdom after himself.

Many of the great men around the king did not like this, for Daniel was a Jew; therefore, they had no great love for him. They were afraid to do him any harm because he was the king's favorite; but they knew that he had three friends—Jews like

himself—whom he dearly loved, and they sought an opportunity to do them some harm, and so to grieve the heart of Daniel. The chance came soon enough. It happened, not long after, that the king made a great statue of gold, and set it up in the open country where every one could see it. Then he sent messages to all the inhabitants of the land, that on a certain day and at a certain hour, all should go down on their knees and adore the statue as their God.

The day came and Daniel's enemies watched the three Jews and gladly saw that they did not obey the king's command. They, of course, went at once to the king and told him. He sent for the three young men, and put the question to them :

"Is it true that you refuse to obey me, and will not kneel to my statue and pray to it?"

"We pray only to the one true God," they answered; "We will not kneel to your statue."

Furious at their answer, the king ordered them to be tied hand and foot, and cast into an enormous furnace heated to seven times its ordinary heat.

The flames leaping out of the furnace killed the attendants nearby, and the three young men fell, bound and helpless as they were, into the midst of the fire.

A wonderful thing then occurred, and startled all who saw it. The three rose to their feet and walked in the midst of the flames, untouched and unharmed; and a fourth person was seen standing by them. It was an Angel from heaven. Together, in a loud, sweet voice, they sang a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God, still in the midst of the flames.

Word was brought to the king, who came in haste

to see the wonder, and he ordered the young men to be freed from the furnace.

At once, the Angel disappeared, and the three men came out with even their clothes untouched by the fire.

Then the king embraced them; and bringing them into his palace, he gave them places of honor and command in his kingdom.

The king again had a dream. This time he saw a great tree of which the leaves were most beautiful, and the fruit most abundant; its branches spread far and wide, giving shelter to the birds and the cattle and the wild beasts.

Then was heard a voice from heaven: "Cut down the tree, cut off its branches, scatter its leaves and fruit; let the beasts that are under it run away, and the birds fly away from its branches. But let the stump remain, and be tied with a band of iron and of brass; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let it so remain till seven years have passed."

The king awoke in great fright, and called his wise men; but they could not tell him what it meant.

He sent for Daniel and told him the dream.

For an hour Daniel answered not a word; then he spoke:

"Since you ask, I must tell you the meaning of the dream. The great tree that you saw, is yourself; for you are great and powerful, and all your people take shelter under the shadow of your hand. But soon God will take your kingdom from you, and you shall be driven out from among men, and shall live with the beasts of the field, and shall eat grass like an ox; and this shall last for seven years, and then all will be restored to you."

And so it came about. Twelve months after, the king was one day walking in his palace, thinking of his power and riches and of all his great deeds. In a moment a loud voice came from the heavens: "The hour has come, and now your kingdom shall pass from you."

At the same moment he was stricken mad; he tore his clothes from his body, and ran like an animal from the palace into the woods. For seven years he lived like a beast; his hair grew long and matted and his nails like claws of birds; he ate grass like an ox, and lived amongst the beasts day and night.

When the seven years were over, his senses returned to him. He was clothed as before, and he came back to his palace. His kingdom was restored to him, and from that day to the day of his death, not long after, he lived in peace and prosperity, acknowledging the great power of the God of the Jews.

After him came a new king of Babylon, whose name was Baltasar.

One day Baltasar made a great feast for all his nobles, and a thousand guests sat at table. During the feast, the king ordered the sacred vessels that had been taken from the temple of Jerusalem, to be used; and the nobles drank their wine from the sacred cups.

Whilst they were all enjoying themselves, eating and drinking, suddenly, on the walls of the room a hand appeared, and it wrote three words that no one could understand.

The king and his nobles looked on with fear and wonder. Then the king sent for all his wise men,

that they might tell him the meaning of the words. But none of them knew.

The queen now said: "Call for Daniel; he is wiser than all the others, and can tell you what this means."

When Daniel came, the king promised that if he could explain the meaning of the words, he should be clothed in royal purple and made a prince of the land, the third after the king.

"Keep your presents, O king; I have no need of them," Daniel cried; "but I will tell you the words and their meaning.

"These three words are *Mane, Thecel, Phares*, and their meaning is this: God has numbered the days of your kingdom, and they are at an end. You are weighed in the balance, and found wanting. Your kingdom is divided and given to your enemies."

Actually, that very night, whilst the king and his nobles were feasting, and all the rest of the city lay buried in sleep, a great army of Persians encamped outside the city walls, and in the darkness they changed the course of the river that flowed into the city, and entered the town along the dry bed of the stream.

Silently and stealthily they came, until the city was filled with soldiers. The palace was surrounded, the king and all his nobles were killed, and the city was captured.

At the head of that army was a chief named Darius, who now became the king of Babylon.

He had heard of the great wisdom of Daniel, and made him one of the princes of his kingdom. Soon he grew to admire and love Daniel more and more,

and determined to make him governor over all the kingdom, second only to himself.

When the nobles heard of this, they were filled with envy, and sought to find some means of bringing Daniel into disfavor with his master.

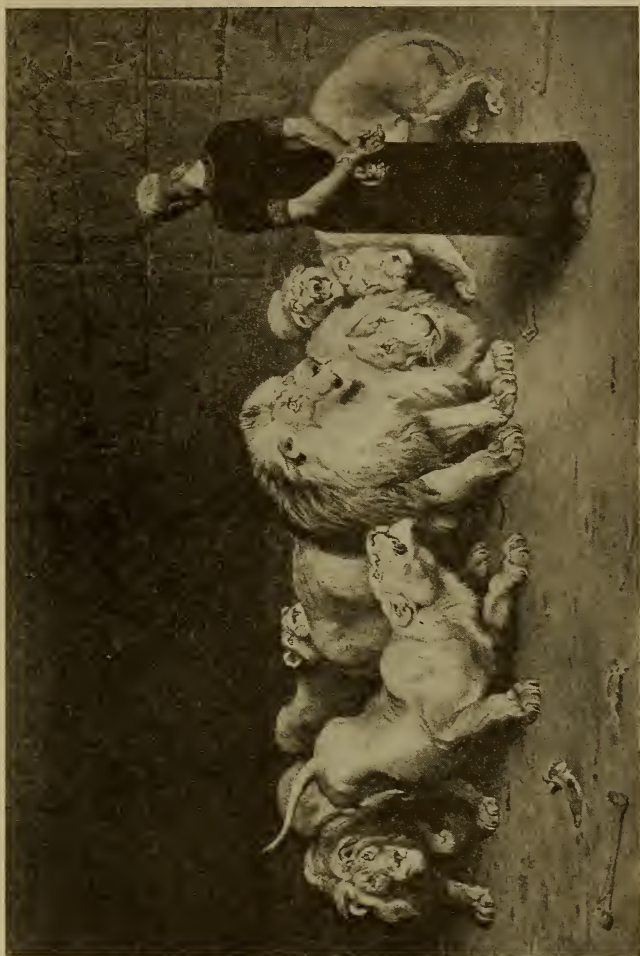
So they went to Darius one day, and said: "O king, we beg you to show your great power to all these people, and to make a decree that for thirty days no one should pray to their God, or to any one but to you. If anybody disobey this command, let him be cast into the lions' den."

This pleased the pride of Darius; without thinking further, he did as they asked and signed the decree.

Then they set a watch on Daniel, for they knew that three times each day he used to kneel down and pray to the true God.

In a few days they came back to the king, and said to him: "There is a man in this very city who has disobeyed your command." "Who is he?" asked the king. "But no matter who he may be, let him be cast to the lions." When they told him it was Daniel, his favorite, the king was sorry he had spoken, and tried to save Daniel; but the nobles said to him: "You know, O king, it is a law of the Persians, that what the king has once said, cannot be changed and must be done." And so it was.

Darius, then, against his will, gave orders to have Daniel cast to the lions. That day the king could neither eat nor rest, so deep was his sorrow; and when evening came, he went to the lion's den, thinking to find but the mangled body of his friend. There a wonderful sight greeted his eyes. The enormous cage was filled with the huge, fierce ani-



DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS.



mals; and among them stood Daniel, calm and fearless, looking towards heaven, his lips moving in prayer.

Around him were grouped the angry, growling beasts, lashing their tails in fury, with hungry looks eyeing the man in their midst. They seemed each moment about to spring upon him, but were kept back by some invisible hand; their fury was less than their fear; hungry and fierce as they were, they dared not touch him.

Seeing Darius, Daniel cried out: "Master, fear not. God has sent his Angel from heaven, who has closed the mouths of the beasts, so that they cannot do me harm."

At this the king commanded him to be taken out of the cage; and the nobles who had accused him, were thrown into the den. At once the ravenous beasts rushed upon them and tore them in pieces.

Daniel returned to the palace, and lived there for many years very happily.

In the meantime, Darius died, and after him, Cyrus ascended the throne. He also loved Daniel, and kept him always with him.

It was during these years that the Angel Gabriel came to Daniel and told him many wonderful things, of which one was that soon the new king, Cyrus, would allow all the Jews to go back to their own country, and again to build up Jerusalem and the Temple. And from the day they went back, sixty-nine weeks of years, that is four hundred and eighty-three years, would pass, and then Christ, the Saviour would come on earth, and would be rejected and put to death by his people. And after that, Jerusalem and the Temple would be destroyed by a

strange nation, who would come from across the seas; and the Jews would be scattered throughout all the earth, never to come together again, till the end of the world.

Before I bring my story to an end, I must tell you the tale of Bel and the Dragon, to show how wise a man was Daniel.

It seems that there was in the city of Babylon a great idol, or statue, called Bel, which the people adored as a god. The king also worshiped it, and went every day to pray to the statue. Each day a great quantity of food was placed before the idol, and strange to say, by the next morning it had always disappeared.

On one occasion the king said to Daniel: "Why do you not adore the idol? Do you not believe that it is a living god? You see all the food it consumes each day."

Daniel smiled and said: "This is no god, nor does it eat." The king became very angry; and calling the priests of Bel, he asked them if in truth the idol ate the food set before it. "Of course," they answered. "We will show you that he does."

That evening, the priests, in the presence of the king and Daniel, brought the food and placed it before the idol; then they left the building.

When they had gone away, Daniel took some ashes and scattered them all around the floor. He and the king then locked the door and left the temple.

When they arrived early the next morning, they saw that the food had really all disappeared. "Now," cried out the king; "will you not believe that Bel is a god?"

Daniel laughed and pointed to the floor. In the ashes they could see foot prints, showing that some one had been there that night. The foot prints seemed to come from behind the statue, and there they found a secret door, cleverly hidden. Each night, the priests of Bel used to come through this door and eat up the provisions.

When the king saw this, he destroyed the idol and killed all the priests in his anger.

There was also in Babylon a great Dragon, or Serpent, that the people worshiped as a god.

The king, one day, said to Daniel: "Surely you cannot say that the Dragon is not a god. Why do you not worship him?"

"If you will give me leave," Daniel answered, "I will very soon show you that he is not a god."

The king agreed. Then Daniel took some pitch and fat and hair, and boiling them together, made a cake of them. He puts this cake in the Dragon's mouth, and at once the great Serpent burst asunder and fell to the ground in pieces.

When the people of Babylon learned this, they gathered together in crowds, and ran to the king's palace shouting and crying: "The king has become a Jew. He has destroyed Bel; he has killed the Dragon and the priests."

They demanded that he should give up Daniel to them to be destroyed. At first the king refused. Then he became frightened; and fearing for his own life, he delivered Daniel into their hands.

They took him at once and cast him into a cage of fierce lions, to be devoured; and there they left him.

At the very same time, far off in the land of Israel, there was a Jew named Habacuc, who was carrying some dinner to the laborers in the field. All of a sudden, an Angel appeared to him and told him to take the dinner to Daniel in the lions' den at Babylon.

"But I never saw Babylon," he answered; "and I know not where the lions' den is."

Instantly, the Angel lifted him into the air, and in a few moments, carried him to the city of Babylon, and set him down in front of the lions' cage. There was Daniel, unharmed by the beasts, who were standing around him, not daring to touch him. Habacuc gave Daniel the dinner, and as quickly as he had been brought thence, the Angel carried him back to his country, and set him down in the field he had left.

Shortly after, the king came to the lions' den, and to his great joy, he found Daniel unharmed.

He commanded him to be taken out of the cage, but those that had put him there, were ordered to be cast into the den. No sooner said than done; and in a moment the hungry lions pounced upon them and devoured them; and nothing was left but their bones.

For some years after, Daniel lived secure and happy in the friendship of the king. And when his time was come to die, he gave up his soul to God, and closed his eyes in peace.

He was buried with great pomp and ceremony; and for many days after, was mourned, not only by his own people, the Jews, but by all the inhabitants of the land of Babylon.

KING ANTIOCHUS.

Seventy years had passed since the people of Israel were carried captive into a strange land. And now, amongst all the Jews scattered throughout the vast empire of Babylon, there was great rejoicing. Cyrus, the king, was about to permit them to return to their native country and rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.

The happy time arrived at last. From the many towns and villages of Persia, came immense throngs of Jews, forming a great caravan, that set out for home.

After many days, they came to the borders of Judea, and then to the city of Jerusalem. There they set to work, and began to build up the houses that had fallen into ruin and decay. They surrounded the city with high and strong walls, and, presently, the Temple itself arose from its ruins and reared its own lofty walls to heaven.

With feasting and gladness the new Temple was dedicated, after which the people dispersed in peace to their homes in the city and in the villages and towns around, where for a while they dwelt in happy security.

Many years now passed; and in the meantime the kingdom of Persia was destroyed, and other kings rose up, who loved not the people of Israel.

Nearly three hundred years after the return of the Jews to their native land, there lived in Syria a certain wicked king. He had been told that enormous

sums of money and treasures of gold and silver were kept by the Jews in the Temple of Jerusalem. So he made up his mind to take these riches away by force, and keep them for himself. He sent an officer named Heliodorus, with many soldiers, to Jerusalem.

The officer came to the high priest and told him his errand, saying that he had come to take away all the treasures of the Temple.

"There are no treasures here," answered the priest, "only the money that is used for the support of the widows and orphans of Israel. Surely you would not rob the poor."

"My master has sent me here," was the reply, "to take the money away; and take it I will."

This answer filled all the Jews with consternation; and they prayed to God with many tears not to suffer His Holy Temple to be robbed by sacrilegious hands.

Without delay, Heliodorus set out with his guard, for the Temple. He entered the sacred building, and was on the way to the treasure chamber when, all of a sudden, he stopped. Right before him, directly in his path, he saw a man mounted on a horse, and the man was terrible to behold. He was clothed all over in armor of gold, and his face was as bright as the sun.

The horse advanced towards Heliodorus, and raising its forefoot, struck him to the ground. At once two other men, bright like the first, appeared; and before the unfortunate man could rise from the ground, they scourged him again and again, till he seemed about to die. The guards tried to rush forward, but they could not move a step. Then the three men, who were no other than Angels sent from

heaven, disappeared as suddenly as they had come. The soldiers took up the almost lifeless body of Heliodorus and carried him out of the Temple. His friends begged the high priest to pray that God might spare the life of the wounded man.

And while the high priest was praying, the same three men appeared again to Heliodorus, clothed as they were before, and said to him:

"For the sake of the high priest, God has spared your life. Give thanks for this; and when you return home, tell your master all that has happened."

They disappeared, and at the same moment Heliodorus became well and strong again.

With many earnest thanks that his life was spared, he left the city with his soldiers, and went back to the king, to whom he told all that had happened, and added: "O king, if you have an enemy of whom you wish to be rid, send him to Jerusalem to take the treasures from the Temple, and he will never return to you alive, for the great God of the Jews protects his Temple, and He will punish those who strive to do it harm."

For a while at least, the Temple was left undisturbed; and not long after, the king himself died.

And now sad days were in store for the people of Israel. Another king reigned in Syria, a most wicked and cruel man, whose name was Antiochus.

For the space of forty days, in all the city of Jerusalem wonderful signs were seen in the air. Bands of soldiers on foot and on horse were seen fighting against one another, and there was clashing of arms and shaking of spears and all the signs of war. The people, seeing these strange omens, were filled with terror and dread; and they prayed without ceasing,

in fear that some great evil was about to fall upon them. And so it came to be.

Rumors were heard that Antiochus was marching towards Jerusalem with a great army of soldiers. Soon he appeared before the walls of the unfortunate city.

The battle was brief and sharp, and the city was taken. Terrible was the slaughter of young and old, women and children, for the wicked king had given orders to spare no one. In the space of three days eighty thousand people were killed, and as many made prisoners and slaves.

Now there lived, at this time, a very old man, Eleazar by name, a good and pious Jew.

One day he was seized by the soldiers of the king, and brought to the judgment hall. They placed the flesh of swine before him, and told him if he would not eat it he would be put to death with cruel torments. You know that the religion of the Jews forbade them to eat the flesh of swine.

In spite of all their threats, Eleazar refused. Some who were standing by had pity on the venerable old man, seeing him weak and tottering from age, and just as he was about to be led away to execution, they took him aside and said to him: "Wait a minute. We will give you some other flesh that it is lawful for you to eat, and we will tell the king that you have obeyed him. In this way you will save your life, without disobeying your law."

But he calmly answered: "No, I will not do even that. For if I do, many of the young men of my nation will be deceived and think that I have eaten the swine's flesh; and they will say: 'Eleazar, who loved the law, has now forsaken it; so we may do

the same.' No; I would rather suffer all things and give up my life, than stain my last few years by so great a sin."

As soon as he had spoken these words, he was dragged away to execution and scourged to death. So he died, leaving to all the people an example of virtue and of courage.

There lived, also, at this time, a widow with seven sons, good and virtuous young men. They, too, were arrested and brought before the king, and commanded to eat the flesh of the swine.

At once the eldest boy spoke up: "We will not do what you ask, for we are ready to die rather than disobey the law."

The king, in anger, ordered his tongue to be cut out, his hands and feet cut off, and then had him burned to death.

The second came before the king; and when he refused to obey, he, too, was put to death with dreadful torments. And so with each one of them, until they came to the youngest, who was but a mere youth.

The king called him and said: "You are only a boy; are you not afraid to die? If you will do what I wish, I will make you rich and happy." Still the boy refused. The king called the mother, and told her to advise her son, before it was too late, to save his life.

"My son," she said to the youth; "I beseech you by all the love you have for me, heed not the words of this cruel man. Die as your brothers have died, for God and for His law."

"Why are they waiting?" he answered. "I will not obey the king." Then he continued: "And you,

O wicked man, with all your power, you cannot escape the hand of God. Soon you will suffer as much as we have suffered, for God will bring down your pride to the ground."

At this the king became furious, and he ordered the boy to be tormented more than all the others.

Last of all, and after she had been forced to see her sons all die so horribly, the mother also was put to death.

The king went on in his wickedness and cruelty; but the anger of God was about to overtake him.

Some years later, he went with an army into Persia; for in one of the cities of that country there was a temple, in which were kept enormous treasures of gold and silver, and he determined to capture the city and take away the treasure.

The people heard of his coming, and gathering together an army, fought bravely against him and drove him out of the city, killing many of his men.

The king was filled with rage; and in his fury, he determined to attack Jerusalem and put all the people to death. So he set out in great haste, boasting on the way, that he would turn the city into a graveyard, and leave not a living soul within its walls. As he was thinking these things in his heart, and speaking to those around him, a fearful pain struck him, and he seemed to be all on fire. The pain grew worse, until it was unbearable. Still he hurried on towards Jerusalem; but as he was driving fast in his chariot, he was thrown by an unseen hand upon the ground, and there he lay stunned and helpless.

When the soldiers came to pick him up, they drew back in horror, for a fearful sight greeted their eyes.

He had turned almost black; the worms were swarming out of his body and crawling all over him; the flesh began to rot and fall from his bones; and the stench was impossible to bear. Soon no one would come near him, for fear and disgust. He, who seemed so great and powerful before, had fallen so low, that even the slaves could hardly be forced to tend him.

And so in awful suffering, he died a miserable death, far from his home, in a strange country among the mountains.

Thus did God bring down the pride of this evil man, and punish him as he deserved; and when the news of his death was spread abroad, the Jews rejoiced and gave thanks to God that He had freed them from so wicked and cruel an enemy.

THE MACHABEES.

In the days of the wicked king Antiochus, there dwelt in the land of the Jews, a brave and just man, whose name was Mathathias. He had five sons, strong, hardy and courageous like the father. They were called the Machabees.

They had left their home in Jerusalem to escape the persecution of Antiochus, and had gone to live in a town near the mountains, called Modin.

After a while, some of the officers of Antiochus came to this town to compel the Jews living there to obey the king's command and forsake the law of God. They said to Mathathias: "You are an hon-

orable and great man in your city. If you will obey the commands of the king, he will enrich you with many presents of gold and silver, and will number you among his friends."

But the brave old man made answer: "Tell the king to keep his presents and his friendship. As for me, I and my family will obey the law of God, and not the commands of the king."

Hardly had he finished these words, when he saw a Jew approaching the altar to offer sacrifice to the idol of the heathens, according to the king's command.

But just as the man was about to commit this sin, Mathathias, in grief and wrath, fell upon him in the sight of all, and killed him. He then turned upon the officer, and with one blow struck him to the ground.

Calling out in a loud voice for all the Jews who loved the law of God to follow them, he and his sons escaped from the city before they could be arrested, and fled to the mountains.

Soon they were joined by many others who remained faithful to the law of God, and for a while, they and their families abode in the mountains.

When the news of this was carried to the king, he became furious, and gathering together an army, set out in pursuit. After a while he came up to some of the Jews, who were encamped in a certain part of the mountains, but it happened that Mathathias and his sons were not among them just at that time.

It was on the Sabbath, or holy day, of the Hebrews that the king prepared for battle. But first

he sent word to them: "Will you now obey the king's command?"

They answered: "We will not; but we will die in our innocence, for God and for His laws."

And because it was the Sabbath, without striking a blow, or offering the least resistance, they all suffered death; and in that day one thousand of the Jews were killed, men, women and children.

When Mathathias heard of this, he and his followers made up their minds not to lay down their lives without resisting, but to fight bravely and to the last against the king and his men.

Forming amongst themselves a goodly army, they fought many battles and defeated the enemy. Then Mathathias went about the country, throwing down the altars of the idols and bringing back his people to the worship of the true God.

As the end of his days now drew near, Mathathias called his sons to him and said to them: "I am about to join my fathers. Be zealous for the law of the true God, and give up your lives for it, if necessary. Many wicked men have risen up against us, and many hard days are in store for our country. But God will be with you; fight bravely and you shall be glorious. When I am gone, choose your brother Judas to be the head of the army, for he is strong and brave, and he will lead you valiantly."

Having ended these words, he blessed them, and closed his eyes in death.

His sons buried him in Modin, and all Israel mourned for him in great sorrow and grief.

In the meantime, Judas, having now become the leader of his people, fought against the enemies of his country.

Before one of the battles, the enemy being in great numbers and strength, Judas, prostrate upon the ground, begged God to help His people against so formidable a foe, and to fight with them against their enemy.

Then the battle began; and in the very height of the conflict, when the fight was fiercest, there came down from heaven, in the sight of all, five men, covered with golden armor and mounted on fiery steeds. Two of these men took Judas between them and covered him with their arms. Then they and the others cast darts and balls of flaming fire upon the enemy on all sides.

With a cry of terror at so dreadful a sight, the enemy gave way, and in that one day over twenty thousand were killed, while the rest fled for their lives.

And so God answered the prayer of Judas, for these five men were Angels, whom he sent from heaven to fight against the enemy and drive them out of the land.

Antiochus died some time after this, and his son ascended the throne. He, also, was determined to conquer the whole land of Israel. So he assembled a powerful army, and in this army he had a number of huge elephants trained to fight. Then he set out for the country of the Jews, in search of Judas and his men.

Soon the two armies approached each other and began to fight, but many of the Jews were stricken with terror on seeing the elephants, for never had they beheld anything like them before.

In truth, the great beasts, maddened by the sight and smell of blood, trampled under foot hundreds

of the Jewish soldiers; others were seized in their trunks and flung high in the air, only to fall limp and lifeless upon the ground. It was terrific.

Still Judas and his men fought bravely on.

Now, amongst the Jewish soldiers there was a certain brave man named Eleazar. He saw that one elephant, the largest of all, was doing frightful havoc amongst the men, killing and wounding many. He ran boldly up to the animal, thrusting aside all who tried to stop him. Then he deliberately stood right under the beast, and with all his strength, drove his sword into its stomach; and the huge elephant fell dead to the ground. But in his fall he crushed out the life of the brave Eleazar.

At last the Jews were defeated, and the king went on his way to Jerusalem. He entered the city, which was almost deserted, and breaking down the walls, went back to his country in triumph.

Many more battles Judas bravely fought in defence of his country and his people. And now his last one was at hand.

The enemy, twenty-two thousand strong, marched against him, and Judas had but eight hundred men. Think of it; only eight hundred men against twenty-two thousand!

With heavy heart and grievous fears, for he knew he could not overcome so great a number, he began the battle; and that day, though the Jews showed great courage in the conflict, and many fell wounded and dead on both sides, Judas himself was killed at last, and his men were forced to flee.

When the day was over, his brothers came, and finding the body, took it away and buried it by the side of his father, in the city of Modin. And all the

people bewailed him with great lamentation, and sorrowed for him many days, saying: "How is the mighty man fallen, that saved the people of Israel!"

Another of the Machabees, Jonathan, the brother of Judas, now became leader of the Jews, and after a while the country was, for a time, at peace, and better days seemed in store for the land of Israel.

Several years now passed; and again the enemy came into the country, but were defeated and driven away.

But shortly after, Jonathan was invited to go to a certain city. Suspecting no treachery, he went, accompanied by only a few of his men. When he entered the place, the gates were closed by the enemy hidden within, he was made prisoner, and all the men with him were killed.

Great was the consternation and anger of the Jews when they learned of this; but they were unable to rescue him, for the city was strong, and the walls thick and high.

In the meantime, Simon, another of the Machabees, took the place of his brother Jonathan, and was leader of the Jewish army.

Messengers came to Simon from the people who had taken his brother; and they said to him: "We have not killed Jonathan; we are only holding him a prisoner for a certain sum of money that he owes us. Now then, send one hundred thousand dollars and Jonathan's two sons, and we will give him back to you safe and sound."

Simon feared they were lying and would not restore his brother; still he sent the money and the two boys.

Sure enough, shortly after the money was received, Jonathan and both his sons were put to death.

Simon secured the body of his brother, and buried it at Modin, by the side of Judas and his father.

The enemy soon after left the country, and the land rested in peace.

Simon enlarged the bounds of his nation, and under his rule the people prospered and were happy for some time longer.

After several years, Simon, the last of the Machabees, finding himself old and no longer vigorous, gave the command of the army to his son John, a man brave and strong like himself.

On one occasion, about this time, Simon, taking his other two sons, went around the land to see that all things were well, and he came to the city of Jericho.

In this city dwelt a certain man, who was wicked and treacherous. This man invited Simon and his sons into his house, and prepared a great banquet in their honor. But in the meantime, and before the dinner began, he hid some armed men in the hall, and in the very midst of the feast, while all were enjoying themselves, these men fell upon Simon and his sons, and killed them as they sat at the table. And so perished the last of the great brothers who so bravely fought for the freedom of Israel.

John, who now became high priest and leader of the Jews, fought many battles, and made for himself a great and glorious name, as those had done who went before him.

And now we come to the last days of Israel.

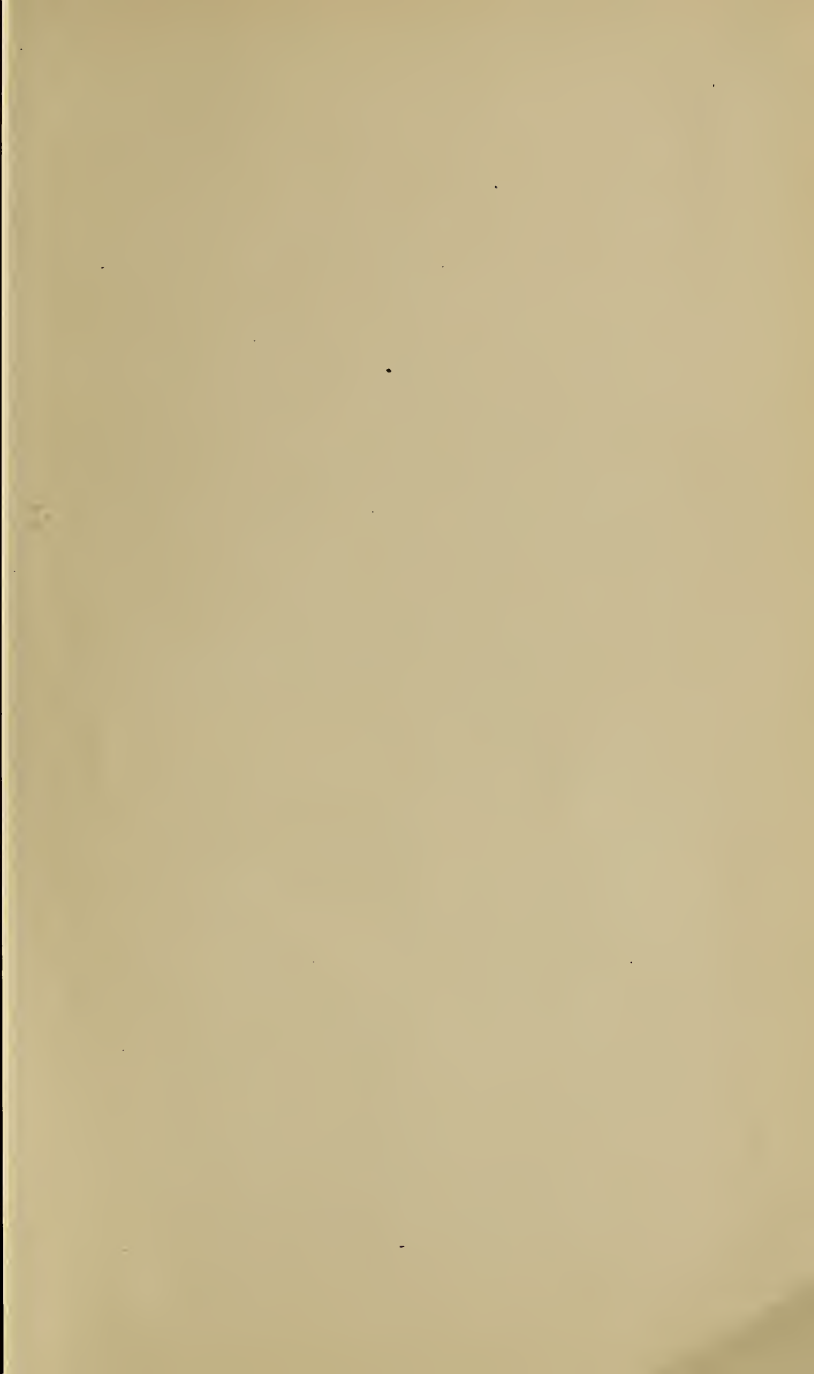
260 HALF HOUR WITH GOD'S HEROES

At the end of some years, the Jewish people fell away again from the love and service of God, and fought among themselves; and war and bloodshed reigned amongst them.

Then, at last, the Romans, a powerful nation from across the seas, came and took possession of the land of Israel, captured the city of Jerusalem, and became masters of the whole country.

All the world was sunk in the darkness of idolatry and sin; the Jews themselves were given up to evil, and there seemed but little good upon earth. The few just men, scattered about, prayed that God would do something to make the world better, and to help them out of the darkness and wickedness that seemed to be everywhere. And their prayer was answered; for now the time had come when the Saviour was to appear.

Herod sat upon the throne of the Jews, placed there by the Romans; all wars had ceased for the time; and Christ, the Son of God, came from His throne in Heaven, came upon earth, and was born, a little child, in Bethlehem of Juda—and the Old Law was at an end forever.



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